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Spriggs

IN MIDSUMMER DAYS

IN MIDSUMMER DAYS AND OTHER TALES. By AUGUST STRINDBERG

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In Midsummer Days

In Midsummer Days

IN Midsummer days when in the countries of the North the earth is a bride, when the ground is full of gladness, when the brooks are still running, the flowers in the meadows still untouched by the scythe, and all the birds singing, a dove flew out of the wood and sat down before the cottage in which the ninety-year-old granny lay in her bed.

The old woman had been bedridden for twenty years, but she could see through her window everything that happened in the farmyard which was managed by her two sons. But she saw the world and the people in her own peculiar manner, for time and the weather had painted her window-panes with all the colours of the rainbow; she need but turn her head a little and things appeared successively red, yellow, green, blue, and violet. If she happened to look out on a cold winter's day when the trees were covered with hoar-frost and the white foliage looked as if it were made of silver, she had but to turn her head a little on the pillow, and all the trees were

TO WHO
ANDOVER

green ; it was summer-time, the ploughed fields were yellow, and the sky looked blue even if a moment before it had been ever so grey. And therefore the old granny imagined that she could work magic, and was never bored.

But the magical window-panes possessed another quality ; they bulged a little and consequently they magnified or reduced every object which came into their field of vision. Whenever, therefore, her grown-up son came home in a bad temper and scolded everybody, granny had but to wish him to be a good little boy again, and straightway she saw him quite small. Or, when she watched her grandchildren playing in the yard, and thought of their future—one, two, three—she changed her position ever so slightly, and they became grown-up men and women, as tall as giants.

All during the summer the window stood open, for then the window-panes could not show her anything so beautiful as the reality. And now, on Midsummer Eve, the most beautiful time of all the year, she lay there and looked at the meadows and towards the wood, where the dove was singing its song. It sang most beautifully of the Lord Jesus, and the joy and splendour of the Kingdom of Heaven, where all are welcome who are weary and heavy laden.

The old woman listened to the song for a little while, and then she said that she was much obliged, but that Heaven could be no more beauti-

ful than the earth itself, and she wanted nothing better.

Thereupon the dove flew away over the meadow into the mountain glen, where the farmer stood digging a well. He stood in a deep hole which he had dug, three yards below the surface ; it was just as if he were standing in his grave.

The dove settled on a fir tree and sang of the joy of Heaven, quite convinced that the man in the hole, who could see neither sky, nor sea, nor meadow, must be longing for Heaven.

" No," said the farmer, " I must first dig a well ; otherwise my summer guest will have no water, and the unhappy little mother will take her child and go and live elsewhere."

The dove flew down to the strand, where the farmer's brother was busy hauling in the fishing-nets ; it sat among the rushes and began to sing.

" No," said the farmer's brother, " I must provide food for my family, otherwise my children will cry with hunger. Later on ! Later on, I tell you ! Let's live first and die afterwards."

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And the dove flew to the pretty cottage, where the unhappy little mother had taken rooms for the summer. She sat on the verandah, working at a sewing machine ; her face was as white as a lily, and her red felt hat looked like a huge poppy on her hair, which was as black as a mourning veil. She was busy making a pinafore which her little girl was to

wear on Midsummer Eve, and the child sat at her feet on the floor, cutting up little pieces of material which were not wanted.

"Why isn't daddy coming home?" asked the little girl, looking up.

That was a very difficult question, so difficult that the young mother could not answer it; and very possibly daddy could not have answered it either, for he was far away in a foreign country with his grief, which was twice as great as mammy's.

The sewing machine was not in good order, but it stitched and stitched; it made as many pricks as a human heart can bear before it breaks, but every prick only served to pull the thread tighter—it was curious!

"I want to go to the village, mammy," said the little girl. "I want to see the sun, for it is so dark here."

"You shall go and play in the sunshine this afternoon, darling."

I must tell you that it was very dark between the high cliffs on this side of the island; the cottage stood in a gloomy pine-grove, which completely hid the view of the sea.

"And I want you to buy me a lot of toys, mammy."

"Darling, we have so little money to buy toys with," answered the mother, bending her head still lower over her work.

And that was the truth; for their comfort had

changed into penury. They had no servant, and the mother had to do the whole house-work herself.

But when she saw the sad face of the little girl, she took her on her knees.

" Put your little arms round mammy's neck," she said.

The little one obeyed.

" Now give mammy a kiss ! "

The rosy little half-open mouth, which looked like the mouth of a little bird, was pressed against her lips ; and when the blue eyes, blue as the flower of the flax, smiled into hers, her beautiful face reflected the sweet innocence of the little one, and made her look like a happy child herself, playing in the sunshine.

" No use my singing to them of the Kingdom of Heaven," thought the dove, " but if I can in any way serve them, I will."

And then it flew away towards the sunny village, for it had work to do there.

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It was afternoon now ; the little mother took a basket on one arm and the child's little hand into hers, and they left the cottage. She had never been to the village, but she knew that it was situated somewhere towards sunset, on the other side of the island, and the farmer had told her that she would have to get over six stiles and walk through six latticed gates before she could get there.

And on they went.

Their way lay along a footpath, full of stones and

old tree-roots, so that she was obliged to carry the little girl, and that was very hard work. The doctor had told her that the child must not strain her left foot, because it was so weak that it might easily have grown deformed.

The young mother staggered along, under her beloved burden, and large beads of perspiration stood like pearls on her forehead, for it was very hot in the wood.

"I am so thirsty, mammy," whispered the little, complaining voice.

"Have patience, darling, there will be plenty of water when we get there."

And she kissed the little parched mouth, and the child smiled and forgot all about her thirst.

But the scorching rays of the sun burned their skin and there was not a breath of air in the wood.

"Try and walk a little, darling," said the mother, putting the child down.

But the little foot gave way and the child could not walk a step.

"I am so tired, mammy," she said, sitting down and beginning to cry.

But the prettiest little flowers, which looked like rose-coloured bells and smelt of sweet almonds, grew all over the spot where she was sitting. She smiled when she saw them, for she had never seen anything half as lovely, and her smile strengthened the heart of the mother so that she could continue her walk with the child in her arms.

Now they had arrived at the first gate. They passed through it and carefully re-fastened the latch.

All of a sudden they heard a noise like a loud neighing; a horse galloped towards them, blocked the path and neighed again; its neighing was answered on the right and the left and from all sides of the wood; the ground trembled, the branches of the trees cracked, and the stones were scattered in all directions by the approaching hoofs. In less than no time the poor, frightened travellers were surrounded on all sides by a herd of savage horses.

The child hid her face on her mother's shoulder, and her little heart ticked with fear like a watch.

"I am so frightened!" she whispered.

"Oh! Father in Heaven, help us!" prayed the mother.

At the same moment a blackbird, sitting on a fir tree, began to sing; the horses scudded away as fast as they could, and there was once more silence in the wood.

They came to the second gate, walked through and re-fastened the latch.

They were on fallow ground now, and the sun scorched them even worse than it had done before. They saw before them rows and rows of dull clods of earth, but in a steep place the clods suddenly began to move, and then they knew that what they had taken for clods of earth were really the backs of a flock of sheep.

Sheep are quite gentle and inoffensive, especially the little lambs, but that is a good deal more than can be said of the ram, who is a savage brute and often takes a delight in attacking those who have never done him any harm. There he was already, jumping over a ditch right into the middle of their path. He lowered his head and walked a few steps backwards.

"I am so frightened, mammy," said the little girl, and her heart began to beat fast.

"Oh! Merciful Father in Heaven, help us!" sighed the mother, with an imploring look upwards.

And high up, in the blue vault of the sky, fluttering its wings like a butterfly, a little lark began to sing. And as it sang the ram disappeared among the grey clods.

They stood before the third gate. They were on a slope now; the ground was swampy and before long they came to a crevice. The hillocks looked like little graves, overgrown with vetch or white cotton-flowers, and they had to be careful to avoid sinking into the swamp. Black berries of a poisonous kind grew in abundance everywhere; the little girl wanted to gather them, and because her mother would not permit it, she began to cry, for she did not understand what poisonous meant.

And as they walked on, they noticed a white sheet, which looked as if it had been drawn in and out through the trees; the sun disappeared behind a bank of clouds and a white darkness, which was very

uncanny, enveloped everything. From the white darkness emerged a head with a white star and two curved horns, and then the head bellowed. And immediately more heads appeared, such a number of them, and they came nearer and nearer.

" I am frightened, mammy," whispered the little girl. " I'm so very frightened ! "

The mother stepped aside and her foot sank into the ground between two hillocks.

" Oh ! Great and Merciful Father in Heaven," she prayed from the bottom of her heart, " have pity on us ! "

And a breeze arose, a strong sea-breeze, and came rustling through the wood ; the trees bowed humbly before the Great Spirit. A slender pine tree bent right down to the young mother and from its crown came a sound like a whisper ; she seized a branch with one hand, and immediately the pine tree rose up again, pulling the despairing mother out of the morass.

At the same moment the sun chased away the fog, and they found that they had arrived at the fourth gate. The mother, who had lost her hat, dried the little girl's tears with her long, black hair ; it made the little girl smile, and as she smiled it was as if the sun were shining right into the mother's heart. She forgot all the troubles which lay behind her and was filled with new strength and determination to reach the fifth gate.

Her heart grew light, for now she could see red-

tiled roofs and gay flags ; and all along their path elder trees grew and wild pink roses.

The little girl could walk now. She filled the basket with flowers, for Lisa, her doll, was to sleep in it all Midsummer night, and she wanted her to have pleasant dreams.

All their cares had vanished and mother and child played while they walked along, for now they had only to cross a little copse of birch trees. The path led up a short hill, and when they had reached the top and turned to the left, a bull stood right in the centre of the lane.

Escape was impossible. The mother fell on her knees, half dead with fear, laid the child on the ground and bent over her protectingly, so that her long hair hung down like a black veil. She raised her hands to heaven and prayed silently. The perspiration dripped from her forehead like drops of blood.

" Oh ! Heavenly Father," she prayed, " take my life, but spare my child ! "

Suddenly she heard a fluttering of wings above her head ; she looked up and saw a white dove flying towards the village, but the bull had disappeared.

And when she dropped her eyes again to look for her child, she saw her sitting near the edge of the wood, gathering wild strawberries, which shone like drops of blood ; and she understood how they had come to spring up.

They passed through the last gate and wandered towards the village.

It lay before them in the sunlight, in a green bay, under shady lindens and maple trees. The white church and the red belfry stood on the top of a hill ; the vicarage was almost smothered with flowering syringa, jasmine grew all round the post office, and a huge old oak overshadowed the gardener's house. Everything looked bright and gay ; the flags were waving in the sunshine ; there were small boats all along the shore and at the landing stages ; one could see at once that it was Midsummer Eve.

But they met no one ; they made their way to the shop first, to do their shopping and buy a drink for the little girl.

But when they came to the shop, it was closed.

" I am so thirsty, mammy ! " complained the little girl.

They went to the post-office. It was closed too.

" I am so hungry, mammy ! "

The mother said nothing, for she could not understand why all the shops were closed on a week day, and why there were no people about.

They came to the gardener's. His house was shut up, and a big dog lay before the threshold.

" I am so tired, mammy ! "

" I am tired, too, darling, but we must try and find a drink of water."

They went from house to house, but every place was closed ; the little girl could walk no further, for

her left foot was so tired that she was quite lame. When the mother saw her pretty little daughter drooping like a faded flower, she, too, lost heart; she sat down by the wayside and took the little girl on her lap, and then the little one fell asleep.

And while the child slept she heard the song of a dove in the syringa shrubs; it sang of the joy in the Kingdom of Heaven, and the never-ending grief and sorrow on earth.

But the mother looked at the sweet face of her sleeping child, framed by a little, white frilled cap, that looked like the petals of a lily. And she felt sure that she was holding the Kingdom of Heaven in her arms.

But the child awoke and asked for a drink.

The mother remained silent.

"I want to go home, mammy," said the little girl, crying.

"What? Go back the same dreadful way we came? Never! I would rather go to the bottom of the sea!"

"I want to go home!"

The mother arose. She saw young birches in the distance beyond the hill; and while she was looking at them, the trees began to move and walk. Then she realised that what she saw was not a procession of trees, but a crowd of people, carrying branches of the birch tree, with which they intended to decorate their homes for the Midsummer festival. And she

went towards them, hoping to find some water in the place whence they came.

On their way they passed a white cottage, behind a green fence with a white gate; the gate stood hospitably open. They entered and found themselves in a garden where pæonies and columbines grew. The mother noticed that the curtains in the lower storey were all drawn before the windows, and that all the curtains were white. But one of the attic windows stood open and a white hand appeared above the pots of touch-me-nots. It waved a little white handkerchief, as if it were waving a last farewell to one who was going on a long journey.

They walked as far as the cottage; in the high grass lay a wreath of myrtle and white roses. But it was too big for a bridal wreath.

They went through the front door and the mother called out if anybody were in? As there was no reply they went into the parlour. On the floor, surrounded by a whole forest of flowers, stood a black coffin with silver feet, and in the coffin lay a young girl with a bridal crown on her head.

The walls of the room were made of new pinewood and only varnished with oil, so that all the knots were visible. And the knots in the knot-holes looked for all the world like so many eyes.

"Oh! Just look at all the eyes, mammy," exclaimed the little girl.

Yes, there were eyes of every description; big eyes, eloquent eyes, grave eyes; little shining baby

eyes, with a lurking smile in the corner; wicked eyes, which showed too much white; frank and candid eyes, which looked one straight into the heart; and, over there, a big, gentle mother's eye, which regarded the dead girl lovingly; and a transparent tear of resin trembled on the lid, and sparkled in the setting sun like a green and red diamond.

"Is she asleep?" asked the child, looking into the face of the dead girl.

"Yes, she is asleep."

"Is she a bride, mammy?"

"Yes, darling."

The mother had recognised her. It was the girl who was to be a bride on Midsummer day, when her sailor lover would return home; but the sailor had written to say that he would not be home until the autumn, and his letter had broken her heart; for she could not bear to wait until the autumn, when the leaves would drop dead from the trees and the winter wind have a rough game with them in the lanes and alleys.

She had heard the song of the dove and taken it to heart.

The young mother left the cottage; now she knew where she would go. She put the heavy basket down outside the gate and took the child into her arms; and so she walked across the meadow which separated her from the shore.

The meadow was a perfect sea of flowers, waving and whispering round her ankles, and the pollen

dyed her white skirt all sorts of pretty colours. Humble-bees, beetles and butterflies spread out their wings and led the way, like a golden cloud, singing. She walked down to the shore with light footsteps.

And across the bay, towards the landing-stage, came a white boat with all sails set, but nobody was at the helm. She waded on in a sea of flowers and perfume, until her white skirt looked like a flower-bed, only that the colours were much more delicate and beautiful.

When she came to the willows, which grew close to the water, she stood still for a moment and looked at a bird's nest, firmly wedged between trunk and branch; and the evening breeze playing in the branches gently rocked three downy little birds, which the little girl was longing to stroke.

"No, darling," said the mother, "you must never touch a bird's nest."

And just as they arrived at the big stepping-stones the boat landed, right at their feet, but not a soul was in it. The mother took the little girl in her arms and went aboard, and immediately the boat turned and sailed out towards the sea.

When they passed the headland on which the church stood, all the bells began to ring, and they rang eagerly and joyously. And the boat sailed out of the bay into the open fjord, from where they could see the sea.

The little girl was radiant with happiness, for the

water was calm and blue ; and presently it was not water through which they sailed, but the blue blossoms of the flax, which she gathered in her outstretched hands.

And the flowers bent down and rose up again, whispering, lapping against the sides of the boat like little waves. The flax-field before them appeared to be infinite, but presently a white mist enveloped them, and they heard the plashing of real waves, but above the mist they heard a lark singing.

" How does the lark come to sing on the sea ? " asked the child.

" The sea is so green that the lark takes it for a meadow," answered the mother.

The mist had dispersed again. The sky was blue and the lark was still singing.

Then they saw, straight before them, in the middle of the sea, a green island with a white, sandy beach, and people, dressed all in pure white, walking hand in hand. The setting sun shone on the golden roof of a colonnade, where white fires burnt in sacred sacrificial vessels ; and the green island was spanned by a rainbow, the colour of which was rose-red and sedge-green.

" What is it, mammy ? "

The mother could make no reply.

" Is it the Kingdom of Heaven of which the dove sang ? What is the Kingdom of Heaven, mammy ? "

" A place, darling, where all people love one

another," answered the mother, "where there is neither grief nor strife."

"Then let us go there," said the child.

"Yes, we will go," said the tired, forsaken little mother.

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The Big Gravel-Sifter

The Big Gravel-Sifter

AN eel-mother and her son were lying at the bottom of the sea, close to the landing-stage, watching a young fisherman getting ready his line.

"Just look at him!" said the eel-mother, "there you have an example of the malice and cunning of the world. . . . Watch him! He is holding a whip in his hand; he throws out the whip-lash—there it is! attached to it is a weight which makes it sink—there's the weight! and below the weight is the hook with the worm. Don't take it in your mouth, whatever you do, for if you do, you are caught. As a rule only the silly bass and red-eyes take the bait. There! Now you know all about it."

The forest of seaweed with its shells and snails began to rock; a plashing and drumming could be heard and a huge red whale passed like a flash over their heads; he had a tail-fin like a cork-screw, and that was what he worked with.

"That's a steamer," said the eel-mother; "make room!"

She had hardly spoken these words when a furious uproar arose above. There was a tramping and stamping as if the people overhead were intent on building a bridge between the shore and the boat in two seconds. But it was difficult to see anything on account of the oil and soot which were making the water thick and muddy.

There was something very heavy on the bridge now, so heavy that it made it creak, and men's voices were shouting :—

" Lift it up !—Ho, there !—Up !—Hold tight !—Up with it !—Up !—Push it along !—Lift it up ! "

Then something indescribable happened. First it sounded as if sixty piles of wood were all being sawn at the same time ; then a cleft opened in the water which went down to the bottom of the sea, and there, wedged between three stones, stood a black box, which sang and played and tinkled and jingled, close to the eel-mother and her son, who hastily disappeared in the lowest depths of the ocean.

Then a voice up above shouted :—

" Three fathoms deep ! Impossible ! Leave it alone. It isn't worth while hauling the old lumber up again ; it would cost more to repair than it's worth."

The voice belonged to the master of the mine, whose piano had fallen into the sea.

Silence followed ; the huge fish with a fin like a screw swam away, and the silence deepened.

After sunset a breeze arose ; the black box in

the forest of seaweed rocked and knocked against the stones, and at every knock it played, so that the fishes came swimming from all directions to watch and to listen.

The eel-mother was the first to put in an appearance. And when she saw herself reflected in the polished surface, she said : " It's a wardrobe with a plate-glass door."

There was logic in her remark, and therefore all the others said : " It is a wardrobe with a plate-glass door."

Next a rock-fish arrived and smelt at the candlesticks, which had not yet come off. Tiny bits of candle ends were still sticking in the sockets. " That's something to eat," it said, " if only it weren't for the whipcord ! "

Then a great bass came and lay flat on the pedal ; but immediately there arose such a rumbling in the box that all the fishes hastily swam away.

They got no further on that day.

At night it blew half a gale, and the musical box went thump, thump, thump, like a pavier's beetle, until sunrise. When the eel-mother and all the rest of them returned, they found that it had undergone a change.

The lid stood open like a shark's mouth ; they saw a row of teeth, bigger than they had ever seen before, but every other tooth was black. The whole machine was swollen at the sides like a seed-fish ; the boards were bent, the pedal pointed upwards like a foot in

the act of walking; the arms of the candlesticks looked like clenched fists. It was a dreadful sight!

"It's falling to pieces," screamed the bass, and spread out a fin, ready to turn.

And now the boards fell off, the box was open, and one could see what it was like inside; and that was the prettiest sight of all.

"It's a trap! Don't go too near!" said the eel-mother.

"It's a hand-loom!" said the stickleback, who builds a nest for itself and understands the art of weaving.

"It's a gravel-sifter," said a red-eye, who lived below the lime-quarry.

It may have been a gravel-sifter. But there were a great many fallals and odds and ends which were not in the least like the sifter which they use for riddling sand. There were little manichords which resembled toes in white woollen stockings, and when they moved it was just as if a foot with two hundred skeleton toes were walking; and it walked and walked and yet never left the spot.

It was a strange thing. But the game was up, for the skeleton no longer touched the strings; it played on the water as if it were knocking at a door with its fingers, asking whether it might come in.

The game was up. A school of sticklebacks came and swam right through the box, and when they trailed their spikes over the strings, the strings

sounded again ; but they played in a new way, for now they were tuned to another pitch.

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On a rosy summer evening soon afterwards two children, a boy and a girl, were sitting on the landing-bridge. They were not thinking of anything in particular, unless it was a tiny piece of mischief, when all at once they heard soft music from the bottom of the sea, which startled them.

" Do you hear it ? "

" Yes, what is it ? It sounds like scales."

" No, it's the song of the gnats."

" No, it's a mermaid ! "

" There are no mermaids. The schoolmaster said so."

" The schoolmaster doesn't know."

" Oh ! do listen ! "

They listened for a long time, and then they went away, home.

Presently two newly arrived summer guests sat down on the bridge ; he looked into her eyes, which reflected the golden sunset and the green shores. Then they heard the sounds of music ; it sounded as if somebody were playing on musical glasses, but in a strange new key, only heard in the dreams of those who dream of giving a new message to the world. But they never thought of looking for any outside source, they believed that it was the song which their own hearts were singing.

Next a couple of annual visitors came saunter-

ing along ; they knew the trick and took a delight in saying in a loud voice :

" It is the submerged piano of the master of the mine."

But whenever there were only new arrivals present, who did not know anything about it, they were puzzled and enjoyed the music, until some of the older ones came and enlightened them. And then they enjoyed it no longer.

The musical box lay there all the summer. The sticklebacks taught their art to the bass, who became much more expert. And the piano became a regular fishing-ground for the summer guests, where they could always be sure to catch bass ; the pilots spread out their nets round about it, and once a waiter fished there for red-eyes. But when his line with the old bell weight had run out, and he tried to wind it up again, he heard a run in X minor, and then the hook was caught. He pulled and pulled, and in the end he brought up five fingers with wool at the fingertips, and the bones cracked like the bones of a skeleton. Then he was frightened and flung his catch back into the sea, although he knew quite well what it was.

In the dog days, when the water is warm and all the fish retire to the greater depths to enjoy the coolness, the music ceased. But on a moonlit night in August, the summer guests held a regatta. The master of the mine and his wife were present. They sat in a white boat and were slowly rowed about by

their sons. And as their boat was gliding over the black water, the surface of which was like silver and gold in the moonlight, they heard a sound of music just below their boat.

"Ha ha!" laughed the master of the mine, "listen to our old piano! Ha ha!"

But he was silent when he saw that his wife hung her head, in the way pelicans do in pictures; it looked as if she wanted to bite her own neck and hide her face.

The old piano and its long history had awakened memories in her of the first dining-room they furnished together, the first of their children which had had music lessons, the boredom of the long evenings, only to be chased away by the crashing volumes of sound which overcame the dulness of everyday life, changed bad temper into cheerfulness, and lent new beauty even to the old furniture. . . . But that is a story which belongs elsewhere.

When it was autumn and the winter wind began to blow, the pilchards came in their thousands and swam through the musical box. It was like a farewell concert, and nothing else, and the seagulls and stormy petrels came in crowds to listen to it. And in the night the musical box was carried out to sea; and that was the end of the matter.

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The Sluggard

The Sluggard

CONDUCTOR CROSSBERG was fond of lying in bed in the morning, firstly, because he had to conduct the orchestra in the evening, and secondly, because he drank more than one glass of beer before he went home and to bed. He had tried once or twice to get up early, but had found no sense in it. He had called on a friend, but had found him asleep ; he had wanted to pay money into the bank, but had found it still closed ; he had gone to the library to borrow music, but it was not yet open ; he had wanted to use the electric trams, but they had not yet started running. It was impossible to get a cab at this hour of the morning ; he could not even buy a pinch of his favourite snuff ; there was nothing at all for him to do. And so he had eventually formed the habit of staying in bed until late ; and after all, he had no one to please but himself.

He loved the sun and flowers and children ; but he could not live on the sunny side of the street on account of his delicate instruments, which were out

of tune almost as soon as they were put into a sunny room.

Therefore, on the 1st of April, he took rooms which faced north. He was quite sure that there was no mistake about this, for he carried a compass on his watch-chain, and he could find the Great Bear in the evening sky.

So far, so good; but then the spring came, and it was so warm that it was really pleasant to live in rooms with a northern aspect. His bedroom joined the sitting-room; he always kept his bedroom in pitch-black darkness by letting down the Venetian blinds; there were no Venetian blinds in the sitting-room, because they were not wanted there.

And the early summer came and everything grew green. The conductor had dined at the restaurant "Hazelmount," and had drunk a bottle of Burgundy with his dinner, and therefore he slept long and soundly, especially as the theatre was closed on that day.

He slept well, but while he slept it grew so warm in the room that he woke up two or three times, or, at any rate, he thought he did. Once he fancied that his wall-paper was on fire, but that was probably the effect of the Burgundy; another time he felt as if something hot had touched his face, but that was certainly the Burgundy; and so he turned over and fell asleep again.

At half-past nine he got up, dressed, and went into the sitting-room to refresh himself with a glass of

milk, which always stood ready for him in the morning.

It was anything but cool in the sitting-room this morning; it was almost warm, too warm. And the cold milk was not cold; it was lukewarm, unpleasantly lukewarm.

The conductor was not a hot-tempered man, but he liked order and method in everything. Therefore he rang for old Louisa, and since he made his first fifty remonstrances always in a very mild tone, he spoke kindly but firmly to her, as she put her head through the door.

"Louisa," he said, "you have given me lukewarm milk."

"Oh! no, sir," replied Louisa, "it was quite cold, it must have got warm in standing."

"Then you must have had a fire in the room; it's very warm here this morning."

No, Louisa had not had a fire; and she retired into the kitchen, very much hurt.

He forgave her for the milk. But a look round the sitting-room made him feel very depressed. I must tell you that he had built a little private altar in a corner, near the piano, which consisted of a small table with two silver candlesticks, a large photograph of a young woman, and a tall, gold-edged champagne glass. This glass—it was the glass he had used on his wedding-day, and he was a widower now—always contained a red rose in memory of and as an offering to her who once had

been the sunshine of his life. Whether it was summer or winter, there was always a rose ; and in the winter time it lasted a whole week, that is to say if he trimmed the stem occasionally and put a little salt into the water. Now, he had put a fresh rose into the glass only last night, and to-day it was faded, shrivelled up, dead, with its head drooping. This was a bad omen. He knew what sensitive creatures flowers are, and had noticed that they thrive with some people and not with others. He remembered how sometimes, in his wife's lifetime, her rose, which always stood on her little work-table, had faded and died quite unexpectedly. And he had also noticed that this always happened when *his sun* was hiding behind a cloud, which after a while would dissolve in large drops to the accompaniment of a low rumbling. Roses must have peace and kind words ; they can't bear harsh voices. They love music, and sometimes he would play to the roses and they opened their buds and smiled.

Now Louisa was a hard woman, and often muttered and growled to herself when she turned out the room. There were days when she was in a very bad temper, so that the milk curdled in the kitchen, and the whole dinner tasted of discord, which the conductor noticed at once ; for he was himself like a delicate instrument, whose soul responded to moods and influences which other people did not feel.

He concluded that Louisa had killed the rose ;

perhaps she had scolded the poor thing, or knocked against the glass, or breathed on the flower angrily, a treatment which it could not bear. Therefore he rang again ; and when Louisa put in her head, he said, not unkindly, but more firmly than before :

" What have you done to my rose, Louisa ? "

" Nothing, sir ! "

" Nothing ? Do you think the flower died without a very good reason ? You can see for yourself that there is no water in the glass ! You must have poured it away ! "

As Louisa had done no such thing, she went into the kitchen and began to cry, for it is disagreeable to be blamed when one is innocent.

Conductor Crossberg, who could not bear to see people crying, said no more, but in the evening he bought a new rose, one which had only just been cut, and, of course, was not wired, for his wife had always had an objection to wired flowers.

And then he went to bed and fell asleep. And again he fancied in his sleep that the wall-paper was on fire, and that his pillow was very hot ; but he went on sleeping.

On the following morning, when he came into the sitting-room, to say his morning prayers before the little altar—alas ! there lay his rose, all the pink petals scattered by the side of the stem. He was just stretching out his hand to touch the bell, when he saw the photograph of his beloved, half rolled up, lying by the side of the champagne glass.

Louisa could not have done that!

"She, who was my all, my conscience and my muse," he thought in his childlike mind, "she is dissatisfied and angry with me; what have I done?"

Well, when he put this question to his conscience, he found, as usual, more than one little fault, and he resolved to eradicate his faults, gradually, of course.

Then he had the portrait framed and a glass shade put over the rose, hoping that now things would be all right, but secretly fearing that they would not.

After that he went on a week's journey; he returned home late at night and went straight to bed. He woke up once, imagining that the hanging lamp was burning.

When he entered the sitting-room late on the following morning, it was downright hot there, and everything looked frightfully shabby. The blinds were faded; the cover on the piano had lost its bright colours; the bound volumes of music looked as if they were deformed; the oil in the hanging-lamp had evaporated and hung in a trembling drop under the ornament, where the flies used to dance; the water in the water-bottle was warm.

But the saddest thing of all was that her portrait, too, was faded, as faded as autumn leaves. He was very unhappy, and whenever he was very unhappy he went to the piano, or took up his violin, as the case might be. . . .

This time he sat down at the piano, with a vague notion of playing the sonata in E minor, Grieg's, of

course, which had been her favourite, and was the best and finest, in his opinion, after Beethoven's sonata in D minor; not because E comes after D, but because it was so.

But the piano was very refractory to-day. It was out of tune, and made all sorts of difficulties, so that he began to believe that his eyes and fingers were in a bad temper. But it was not their fault. The piano, quite simply, was out of tune, although a very clever tuner had only just tuned it. It was like a piano bewitched, enchanted.

He seized his violin; he had to tune it, of course. But when he wanted to tighten the E string, the screw refused to work. It had dried up; and when the conductor tried to use force, the string snapped with a sharp sound, and rolled itself up like a dried eel-skin.

It was bewitched!

But the fact that her photograph had faded was really the worst blow, and therefore he threw a veil over the altar.

In doing this, he threw a veil over all that was most beautiful in his life; and he became depressed, began to mope, and stopped going out in the evening.

It would be Midsummer soon. The nights were shorter than the days, but since the Venetian blinds kept his bedroom dark, the conductor did not notice it.

At last, one night—it was Midsummer night—he awoke, because the clock in the sitting-room struck

thirteen. There was something uncanny about this, firstly, because thirteen is an unlucky number, and secondly, because no well-behaved clock can strike thirteen. He did not fall asleep again, but he lay in his bed, listening. There was a peculiar ticking noise in the sitting-room, and then a loud bang, as if a piece of furniture had cracked. Directly afterwards he heard stealthy footsteps, and then the clock began to strike again ; and it struck and struck, fifty times—a hundred times. It really was uncanny !

And now a luminous tuft shot into his bedroom and threw a figure on the wall, a strange figure, something like a fylfot, and it came from the sitting-room. There was a light, then, in the sitting-room ? But who had lit it ? And there was a tinkling of glasses, just as if guests were there ; champagne glasses of cut-crystal ; but not a word was uttered. And now he heard more sounds ; sounds of canvas being furled, or clothes passed through a mangle, or something of that sort.

The conductor felt compelled to get up and look, and he went, commending his soul into the hands of the Almighty.

Well, first of all he saw Louisa's print-dress disappearing through the kitchen door ; then he saw blinds, but blinds which had been pulled up ; he saw the dining-table covered with flowers, arranged in glasses ; as many flowers as there had been on his wedding-day when he had brought his bride home.

And behold! The sun, the sun shone right into his face, shone on blue fjords and distant woods; it was the sun which had illuminated the sitting-room and played all the little tricks. He blessed the sun which had been up so early in the morning and made a game of the sluggard. And he blessed the memory of her whom he called the sun of his life. It was not a new name, but he could not think of a better one, and as it was, it was good enough.

And on his altar stood a rose, quite fresh, as fresh as *she* had been before the never-ending work had tired her. Tired her! Yes, she had not been one of the strong ones; and life with its blows and knocks had been too brutal for her! He had not forgotten how, after a day's cleaning or ironing, she would throw herself on the sofa and say in a complaining little voice, "I am so tired!" Poor little thing, this earth had not been her home, she had only played once, on tour, as it were, and then had gone far away.

"She lacked sunshine," the doctor had said, for at that time they couldn't afford sun, because rooms on the sunny side are so expensive.

But now he had sun without having known it; he stood right in the sunlight, but it was too late. Midsummer was past, and soon the sun would disappear again, stay away for a year and then come back. Things are very strange in this world!

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The Pilot's Troubles

The Pilot's Troubles

THE pilot cutter lay outside, beyond the last beacon fire on the headland; the winter sun had set long ago and the sea ran high; it was the real sea with real huge breakers. Suddenly the first mate signalled: "Sailing ship to windward."

Far out at sea, a long way off the harbour, a brig was visible; she had backed her sails and hoisted the pilot's flag; she was asking to be taken into port.

"Look out!" shouted the master-pilot, who was standing at the helm. "We'll have a job in this sea, but we must try and get hold of her in tacking, and you, Victor, throw yourself into her rigging as soon as you get the chance . . . bring the boat round! Now! Clear!"

The cutter turned and steered a course to the brig which lay outside, pitching.

"Queer that she should have furled all her canvas. . . . Can any one see a light aboard? No! And no light on the masthead, either! Look out, Victor!"

Now the cutter was alongside ; Victor stood waiting on the gunwale, and the next time she rose on the crest of a big wave, he leapt into the rigging of the brig, while the cutter sheered off, tacked, and made for the harbour.

Victor sat in the rigging, half-way between deck and cross-trees, trying to recover his breath before descending on deck. As soon as he came down he went to the helm, which was quite the right thing for him to do. Imagine how shocked he was when he found it deserted ! He shouted " Ho there ! " but received no reply.

" They're all inside, drinking," he thought, peering through the cabin windows. No, not a soul ! He crossed over to the kitchen, examined the quarter-deck,—not a living being anywhere. Then he realised that he was on a deserted ship ; he concluded that she had sprung a leak and was sinking.

He tried to discover the whereabouts of the cutter, but she had disappeared in the darkness.

It was quite impossible for him to make port. To set the sails, haul in the brails and bowlines, and at the same time stand at the helm, was more than any sailor could manage.

There was nothing to be done, then, but let the vessel drift, although he was aware of the fact that she was drifting out to sea.

It would not be true to say that he was pleased, but a pilot is prepared for anything, and the thought that he might possibly meet a sailing ship by and

by, reassured him. But it was necessary to show a light and signal.

He made his way towards the kitchen, intending to look for matches and a lantern. Although the sea was very rough, he noticed that the ship did not move, a fact which astonished him very much. But when he came to the mainmast, he was even more astonished to find himself walking on a parqueted floor, partly covered by a strip of carpet of a small blue and white checked pattern. He walked and walked, but still the carpet stretched before him, and still he came no nearer to the kitchen. It was certainly uncanny, but it was also amusing, for it was a new experience.

He was a long way off the end of the carpet yet, when he found himself at the entrance to a passage with brilliantly illuminated shops on either side. On his right stood a weighing machine and an automatic figure. Without a moment's hesitation he jumped on the little platform of the weighing machine and slipped a penny in the slot. As he was quite sure that he weighed eleven stone, he could not help smiling when the indicator registered only one. Either the machine has gone wrong, he thought, or I have been transported to some other planet, ten times larger, or ten times smaller than the earth; he had been a pupil at the School of Navigation, you see, and knew something of astronomy.

He jumped off and turned to the automatic figure, eager to find out what it contained; his penny had

hardly dropped when a little flap opened and a large, white envelope, sealed with a big, red seal, fell out. He couldn't make out the letters on the seal, but that was neither here nor there, as he did not know who his correspondent was.

He tore open the envelope and read . . . first of all the signature, just as everybody else does. The letter began . . . but I'll tell you that later on; it's sufficient for you to know now that he read it three times and then put it into his breast-pocket with a very thoughtful mien; a very thoughtful mien.

Then he penetrated into the heart of the passage, all the time keeping carefully in the centre of the carpet. There were all sorts of shops, but not a single human being, either before or behind the counters. When he had walked a little way, he stopped before a big shop window, behind which a great number of shells and snails were exhibited. As the door stood open, he went in. The walls of the shop were lined with shelves from floor to ceiling and filled with snails collected from all the oceans of the world. Nobody was in the shop, but a ring of tobacco smoke hung in the air, which looked as if somebody had only just blown it. Victor, who was a bright lad, put his finger through it. "Hurrah!" he laughed, "now I'm engaged to Miss Tobacco!"

A queer sound, like the ticking of a clock, fell on his ear, but there was no clock anywhere, and presently he discovered that the sound came from

a bunch of keys. One of the keys had apparently just been put into the cash-box, and the other keys swung to and fro with the regular movement of a pendulum. This went on for quite a little while. Then there was silence once more, and when it was as still as still could be, a low whistling sound, like the wind blowing through the rigging of a ship, or steam escaping through a narrow tube, could be heard. The sound was made by the snails ; but as they were of different sizes, each one of them whistled in a different key ; it sounded like a whole orchestra of whistlers. Victor, who was born on a Thursday, and therefore understood the birds' language, pricked up his ears and tried to catch what they were whistling. It was not long before he understood what they were saying.

" I have the prettiest name," said one of them, " for I am called *Strombus pespelicanus* ! "

" I'm much the best looking," said the purple-snail, whose name was *Murex* and something else quaint.

" But I've the best voice," said the tiger-shell ; it is called tiger-shell because it looks like a panther.

" Oh ! tut, tut ! " said the common garden-snail, " I'm more in demand than any other snail in the world ; you'll find me all over the flower-beds in the summer, and in the winter I lie in the wood-shed in a cabbage tub. They call me uninteresting, but they can't do without me."

" What dreadful creatures they are," thought

Victor, " they think of nothing but blowing their own trumpets " ; and to while away the time he took up a book which lay on the counter. As he had learned to use his eyes, he saw at a glance that it opened at page 240 and that chapter 51 began at the top of the left-hand side, and had for a motto a verse written by Coleridge, the gist of which struck him like a flash of lightning. With burning cheeks and bated breath he read . . . I'll tell you what he read later on, but I may admit at once that it had nothing whatever to do with snails.

Victor liked the shop and sat down at a little distance from the cash-box, the immediate vicinity of which is never without a certain risk. He began to ponder over all the queer animals which went down to the sea as he did ; he was sure that they could not find it too warm at the bottom of the sea and yet they perspired ; and whenever they perspired chalk, it immediately became a new house. They wriggled like worms, some to the right and some to the left ; it was clear that they had to wriggle in some direction and, of course, they could not all turn to the same side.

All at once a voice came from the other side of the green curtain which separated the shop from the back parlour.

" Yes, we know all that," shouted the voice, " but what we don't know is this : the cockle of the ear belongs to the species of the *Helix*, and the little bones near the drum are exactly like the animal

in *Limnaeus stagnalis*, and that's printed in a book."

Victor, who realised at once that the voice belonged to a thought-reader, shouted back brutally, but without showing the least surprise :—

" We know all that, but why we should have a *Helix* in our ears is as unknown to the book as to the dealer in snails——"

" I'm not a dealer in snails," bellowed the voice behind the curtain.

" What are you, then ? " Victor bellowed back.

" I'm . . . a troll ! "

At the same moment the curtains were drawn aside a little, and a head appeared in the opening of so terrifying an aspect, that anybody but Victor would have taken to his heels. But he, who knew exactly how to treat a troll, looked steadily at the glowing pipe-bowl ; for that is exactly what the troll looked like as he stood blowing rings through the parted curtains. When the smoke rings had floated within his reach, he caught them with his fingers and threw them back.

" I see you can play quoits," snarled the troll.

" A little bit," answered Victor.

" And you aren't afraid ? "

" A sailor must never be afraid of anything ; if he is, the girls won't like him."

And as he was tired of the snails, Victor seized the opportunity to beat a retreat without appearing to run away. He left the shop, walking backwards,

for he knew that a man must never show his back to the enemy, because his back is far more sensitive than ever his face could be.

And on he went on the blue and white carpet. The passage was not a straight one, but wound and curved so that it was impossible to see the end of it; and still there were new shops, and still no people and no shop proprietors. But Victor, taught by his experience, understood that they were all in the back parlours.

At last he came to a scent-shop, which smelt of all the flowers of wood and meadow; he thought of his sweetheart and decided to go in and buy her a bottle of Eau-de-Cologne.

No sooner thought than done. The shop was very much like the snail shop, but the scent of the flowers was so overpowering that it made his head ache, and he had to sit down on a chair. A strong smell of almonds caused a buzzing in his ears, but left a pleasant taste in his mouth, like cherry-wine. Victor, never at a loss, felt in his pocket for his little brass box, that had a tiny mirror on the inside of the lid, and put a piece of chewing tobacco in his mouth; this cleared his brain and cured his headache. Then he rapped on the counter and shouted :—

"Hallo! Any one there?"

There was no answer. "I'd better go into the back parlour," he thought, "and do my shopping there." He took a little run, put his right hand on the counter and cleared it at a bound. Then he

pushed the curtains aside and peeped into the room. A sight met his eyes which completely dazzled him. An orange tree, laden with blossoms and fruit, stood on a long table covered with a Persian rug, and its shining leaves looked like the leaves of a camellia. There were rows of cut-crystal glasses filled with all the most beautiful scented flowers of the whole world, such as jasmine, tuberoses, violets, lilies of the valley, roses, and lavender. On one end of the table, half hidden by the orange tree, he saw two delicate white hands and a pair of slender wrists under turned-up sleeves, busy with a small distilling apparatus, made of silver. He did not see the lady's face, and she, too, did not appear to see him. But when he noticed that her dress was green and yellow, he knew at once that she was a sorceress, for the caterpillar of the hawk-moth is green and yellow, and it, too, knows how to bewitch the eye. The lower end of its body looks as if it were its head and has a horn like a unicorn, so that it frightens away its enemies with its mock face, while it feeds in peace with that part of its body which looks like its hind quarter.

" I know that I'll have a bit of a tussle with her," thought Victor, " but I'd better let her begin ! " He was quite right, because if one wants to make people talk, one has but to remain silent oneself.

" Are you the gentleman who is looking for a summer resort ? " asked the lady, coming towards him.

" That's me ! " said Victor, merely in order to say something, for he had never thought of looking for a summer resort in the winter time.

The lady seemed embarrassed, but she was as beautiful as sin, and cast a bewitching glance at the pilot.

" It's no use trying to bewitch me, for I am engaged to a very nice girl," he said, staring between her second and third finger in the manner of a witch, when she wants to charm the judge.

The lady was young and beautiful from the waist upwards, but below the waist she seemed very old ; it was just as if she had been patched together of two pieces which didn't match.

" Well, show me the summer resort," said the pilot.

" If you please, sir," replied the lady, opening a door in the background.

They went out and at once found themselves in a wood, consisting entirely of oak trees.

" We'll only just have to cross the wood, and we'll be there," said the lady, beckoning to the pilot to go on, for she did not want to show him her back.

" I shouldn't wonder if there were a bull somewhere about," said the pilot, who had all his wits about him.

" Surely you aren't afraid of a bull ? " replied the lady.

" We'll see," answered the pilot.

They walked across stony hillocks, tree-roots,

moors and fells, clearings and deep recesses, but Victor could not help turning round every now and then to see whether she was following him, for he could not hear her footsteps. And even when he had turned round and had her right before his eyes he had to look very hard, for her green and yellow dress made her almost invisible.

At last they came to an open space, and when Victor had reached the centre of the clearing, there was the bull; it was just as if it had stood there all the time waiting for him. It was jet black, with a white star in the middle of its forehead, and the corners of its eyes were blood-red.

Escape was impossible; there was nothing for it but to fight. Victor glanced at the ground and behold! there lay a stout cudgel, newly cut. He seized it and took up his position.

"You or I!" he shouted. "Come on! One—two—three!" The fight began. The bull backed like a steam-boat, smoke came through its nostrils, it moved its tail like a propeller, and then came on at full speed.

The cudgel flashed through the air and with a sound like a shot hit the bull right between the eyes. Victor sprang aside, and the bull dashed past him. Then everything seemed to change, and Victor, terrified, saw the monster make for the border of the wood, from whence his sweetheart, in a light summer dress, emerged to meet him.

"Climb up the tree, Anna," he shouted. "The

bull's coming ! " It was a cry of anguish from the very bottom of his soul.

And he ran after the monster and hit it on the slenderest part of its hind-legs in the hope of breaking its shin-bone. With superhuman strength he felled the giant. Anna was saved, and the pilot held her in his arms.

" Where shall we go ? " he asked. " Home, of course ? "

It did not occur to him to ask her whence she had come, for reasons which we shall learn hereafter.

They walked along the footpath, hand in hand, happy at their unexpected meeting. When they had gone a little way, Victor suddenly stood still.

" Just wait a moment," he said. " I must go and have a look at the bull ; I'm sorry for it, poor brute ! "

The expression of Anna's face changed, and the corners of her eyes grew bloodshot. " All right ! I'll wait," she said, with a savage and malicious glance at the pilot.

Victor gazed at her sadly, for he knew that she had told him an untruth. But he followed her. There was something extraordinary about her walk, and all at once the whole of his left side grew as cold as ice.

When they had proceeded a little further, Victor stopped again.

" Give me your hand," he said. " No, the left

one." He saw that she was not wearing her engagement ring.

"Where's your ring?" he asked.

"I've lost it," she replied.

"You are my Anna, and yet you are not," he exclaimed. "A stranger has taken possession of you."

As he said these words, she looked at him with a side-long glance, and all at once he realised that her eyes were not human, but the blood-shot eyes of a bull; and then he understood.

"Begone, witch!" he cried, and breathed into her face.

If you could only have seen what happened now! The would-be Anna was immediately transformed, her face grew green and yellow like gall, and she burst with rage; at the next moment a black rabbit jumped over the bilberry bushes and disappeared in the wood.

Victor stood alone in the perplexing, bewildering forest, but he was not afraid. "I will go on," he thought, "and if I should meet the devil himself, I will not be afraid; I shall say the Lord's Prayer, and that will go a long way towards protecting me."

He trudged on and presently he came to a cottage. He knocked; the door was opened by an old woman; he inquired whether he could stay the night. He could stay, if he liked, but the old dame had nothing to offer him but a small attic, which was only so so.

Victor did not mind what it was like, as long as it was a place where he could sleep.

When they were agreed about the price, he followed her upstairs to the attic. A huge wasp's nest hung right over the bed, and the old dame began to make excuses for harbouring such guests.

" It doesn't matter in the least," interrupted the pilot, " wasps are like human beings, quite inoffensive until you irritate them. Perhaps you keep snakes, too ? "

" Well, there are some, of course."

" I thought so ; they like the warmth of the bed, so we shall get on. Are they adders or vipers ? I don't very much mind which, but on the whole I prefer vipers."

The old dame watched him breathlessly while he arranged his bed, and in every way betrayed his firm resolution to spend the night in her cottage.

All at once an excited buzzing could be heard outside the closed window, and a huge hornet bumped against the glass.

" Let the poor thing come in," said the pilot, opening the window.

" No, no, not that one, kill it ! " yelled the old dame.

" Why should I ? Perhaps its young ones are in this room, and would starve. Am I to lie here and listen to the screaming of hungry babies ? No, thank you ! Come in, little wasp ! "

" It will sting you ! " shrieked the old dame.

" No, indeed it won't. It only stings the wicked."

The window was open now. A big hornet, as

large as a pigeon's egg, flew in ; buzzing like a bass string, it flew at once to the nest. And then it was still.

The old dame left the attic, and the pilot got between the sheets.

When he came downstairs into the parlour on the following morning, the old dame was not there. A black cat sat on the only chair and purred ; cats have been condemned to purr, because they are such lazy beasts, and they must do something.

" Get up, pussy," said the pilot, " and let me sit down."

And he took the cat and put it on the hearth. But it was no ordinary cat, for immediately sparks began to fly from its fur, and the chips caught fire.

" If you can light a fire, you can make me some coffee," said the pilot.

But the cat is so constituted that it never wants to do what it is told, and so it began at once to swear and spit until the fire was out.

In the meantime the pilot had heard somebody leaning a spade against the wall of the cottage. He looked out of the window and saw the old dame standing in a pit which she had dug in the garden.

" I see you are digging a grave for me, old woman," he said.

The old dame came in. When she saw Victor safe and sound, she was beside herself with amazement ; she confessed that up to now nobody had ever left

the attic alive, and that therefore she had dug his grave in anticipation.

She was a little short-sighted, but it seemed to her that the pilot was wearing a strange handkerchief round his neck.

" Ha ha ! Have you ever seen such a handkerchief in all your life ? " laughed Victor, putting his hand up to his throat.

Wound round his neck was a snake which had tied itself in front into a knot with two bright yellow spots ; the spots were its ears, and its eyes shone like diamonds.

" Show auntie your scarfpins, little pet," said the pilot, gently scratching its head, and the snake opened its mouth and disclosed two sharp, pointed teeth right in the middle of it.

At the sight of them the old dame fell on her knees and said, " Now I see that you have received my letter and understood its meaning. You are a brave lad ! "

" So the letter I got out of the automatic machine was from you," said the pilot, taking it from his breast pocket. " I shall have it framed when I get home."

Would you like to know what was written in the letter ? Just these few words in plain English, " Don't be bluffed," which might be translated, " Fortune favours the Brave."

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Yes, but how was it that the pilot could walk

from the ship down the passage?" asked Annie-Mary, when her mama had finished the story. "And did he come back, or had he dreamed the whole story?"

"I'll tell you another time, little Miss Curiosity," said her mama.

"And then there was a verse in the book——"

"What verse? Oh, I see . . . in the snail shop. . . . Well, I'm afraid I've forgotten it. But you mustn't ask too many details, for it's only a fairy tale, little girlie."

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Photographer and Philosopher

Photographer and Philosopher

ONCE upon a time there was a photographer. He was a splendid photographer; he did profiles and full-faces, three-quarter and full-length portraits; he could develop and fix, tone and print them. He was the deuce of a fellow! But he was always discontented, for he was a philosopher, a great philosopher and a discoverer. His theory was that the world was upside down. It was plainly proved by the plate in the developer. Everything that was on the right side of the original, now appeared on the left; everything that was dark, became light; light became shade; blue turned into white, and silver buttons looked as dark as iron. The world *was* upside down.

He had a partner, quite an ordinary man, full of petty characteristics. For instance, he smoked cigars all day long; he never shut a door; he put his knife into his mouth, instead of using his fork; he wore his hat in the room; he cleaned his nails in the studio, and in the evening he drank three glasses of beer.

He was full of faults !

The philosopher, on the other hand, was perfect, and therefore he nursed resentment against his imperfect brother ; he would have liked to dissolve the partnership, but he could not, because their business held them together ; and because they were bound to remain in partnership, the resentment of the philosopher turned into an unreasonable hatred. It was dreadful !

When the spring came they decided to take a lodging in a summer resort, and the partner was despatched to find one. He did find one. And one Saturday they departed together on a steamer.

The philosopher sat all day long on deck and drank punch. He was a very stout man and suffered from several things ; his liver was out of order, and there was something wrong with his feet, perhaps rheumatism, or some similar disease. When they arrived, they crossed the bridge and went ashore.

" Is this the place ? " asked the philosopher.

" A very little walk will take us there," answered the partner.

They went along a footpath, full of roots, and the path ended abruptly before a stile. They had to climb over it. Then the road became stony, and the philosopher complained of his feet, but he forgot all about his pains when they came to another stile. After that, all trace of the road disappeared ; they walked on the bare rock through shrubs and bilberry bushes.

Behind the third fence stood a bull, who chased the philosopher to the fourth stile, where he arrived in a bath of perspiration, which opened all the pores of his skin. When they had crossed the sixth stile, they could see the house. The philosopher went in and immediately stepped on to the verandah.

"Why are there so many trees?" he asked. "They interrupt the view."

"But they shelter the house from the strong sea-breezes," answered the partner.

"And the place looks like a churchyard; why, the house stands in the centre of a pine-wood."

"A very healthy spot," replied the partner.

Then they wanted to go and bathe. But there was no proper bathing-place, in the philosophical sense of the word. There was nothing but the stony ground and mud.

After they had bathed the philosopher felt thirsty, and wanted to drink a glass of water at the spring. It was of a reddish-brown colour, and had a peculiar, strong taste. It was no good. Nothing was any good. And meat was unobtainable, there was nothing to be had but fish.

The philosopher grew gloomy and sat down under a pumpkin to deplore his fate. But there was no help for it. He had to stay, and his partner returned to town to look after the business during his friend's absence.

Six weeks passed and then the partner returned to his philosopher.

He was met on the bridge by a slender youth with red cheeks and a sunburnt neck. It was the philosopher, rejuvenated and full of high spirits.

He jumped over the six stiles and chased the bull.

When they were sitting on the verandah, the partner said to him :—

" You are looking very well, what sort of a time have you had ? "

" Oh ! an excellent time ! " said the philosopher. " The fences have taken off my fat ; the stones have massaged my feet ; the mud-baths have cured me of my rheumatism ; the plain food has cured my liver, and the pine-trees my lungs ; and, could you believe it, the brown spring-water contained iron, just what I wanted ! "

" Well, you old philosopher," said the partner, " don't you understand that from the negative you get a positive, where all the shade becomes light again ? If you would only take such a positive picture of me and try and find out what faults I do *not* possess, you would not dislike me so much. Only think : I don't drink, and therefore I am able to manage the business ; I don't steal ; I never talk evil of you behind your back ; I never complain ; I never make white appear black ; I am never rude to the customers ; I rise early in the morning ; I clean my nails so as to keep the developer clean ; I leave my hat on so that no hairs shall fall on the plates ; I smoke so as to purify the air of poisonous gases ; I keep the door ajar so as not to make a noise

in the studio ; I drink beer in the evening so as to escape the temptation of drinking whisky ; and I put the knife into my mouth because I am afraid of pricking myself with the fork."

" You really are a great philosopher," said the photographer, " henceforth we will be friends ! Then we shall get on in life ! "

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Half a Sheet of Foolscap

Half a Sheet of Foolscap

THE last furniture van had left ; the tenant, a young man with a crape band round his hat, walked for the last time through the empty rooms to make sure that nothing had been left behind. No, nothing had been forgotten, nothing at all. He went out into the front hall, firmly determined never to think again of all that had happened to him in these rooms. And all at once his eyes fell on half a sheet of foolscap, which somehow had got wedged between the wall and the telephone ; the paper was covered with writing, evidently the writing of more persons than one. Some of the entries were written quite legibly with pen and ink, while others were scribbled with a lead-pencil ; here and there even a red pencil had been used. It was a record of everything that had happened to him in the short period of two years ; all these things, which he had made up his mind to forget, were noted down. It was a slice of a human life on half a sheet of foolscap.

He detached the paper ; it was a piece of scribbling

paper, yellow and shining like the sun. He put it on the mantelpiece in the drawing-room and glanced at it. Heading the list was a woman's name: "Alice," the most beautiful name in the world, as it had seemed to him then, for it was the name of his fiancée. Next to the name was a number, "15,11." It looked like the number of a hymn, on the hymn-board. Underneath was written "Bank." That was where his work lay, his sacred work to which he owed bread, home, and wife—the foundations of life. But a pen had been drawn through the word, for the Bank had failed, and although he had eventually found another berth, it was not until after a short period of anxiety and uneasiness.

The next entries were: "Flower-shop and livery-stable." They related to his betrothal, when he had plenty of money in his pockets.

Then came "furniture dealer and paper-hanger"—they were furnishing their house. "Forwarding agents"—they were moving into it. The "Box-office of the Opera-house, No. 50,50"—they were newly married, and went to the opera on Sunday evenings; the most enjoyable hours of their lives were spent there, for they had to sit quite still, while their souls met in the beauty and harmony of the fairyland on the other side of the curtain.

Then followed the name of a man, crossed out. He had been a friend of his youth, a man who had risen high in the social scale, but who fell, spoilt by success, fell irremediably, and had to leave the country.

So unstable was fortune!

Now, something new entered the lives of husband and wife. The next entry was in a lady's hand: "Nurse." What nurse? Well, of course, the kindly woman with the big cloak and the sympathetic face, who walked with a soft footfall, and never went into the drawing-room, but walked straight down the passage to the bedroom.

Underneath her name was written "Dr. L."

And now, for the first time, a relative appeared on the list: "Mama." That was his mother-in-law, who had kept away discreetly, so as not to disturb their newly found happiness, but was glad to come now, when she was needed.

A great number of entries in red and blue pencil followed: "Servants' Registry Office"—the maid had left and a new one had to be engaged. "The chemist's"—hm! life was growing dark. "The dairy"—milk had been ordered—sterilised milk!

"Butcher, grocer, etc." The affairs of the house were being conducted by telephone; it argued that the mistress was not at her post. No, she wasn't, for she was laid up.

He could not read what followed, for it grew dark before his eyes; he might have been a drowning man trying to see through salt water. And yet, there it was written, plainly enough: "undertaker—a large coffin and a small one." And the word "dust" was added in parenthesis.

It was the last word of the whole record. It

ended with "dust"! and that is exactly what happens in life.

He took the yellow paper, kissed it, folded it carefully, and put it in his pocket.

In two minutes he had lived again through two years of his life.

But he was not bowed down as he left the house. On the contrary, he carried his head high, like a happy and proud man, for he knew that the best things life has to bestow had been given to him. And he pitied all those from whom they are withheld.

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Conquering Hero and Fool

Conquering Hero and Fool

IT was on the evening of a spring day in 1880 (a day which will never be forgotten in Sweden, because it is the day of commemoration of a national event), when an old couple, simple country people,were standing on the headland at the entrance to the harbour of Stockholm, looking at the dark watercourse under the dim stars, and watching a man who was busy with a dark, undefinable object on the landing bridge. They stood there for a long, long time, now gazing at the dark watercourse, now looking at the brilliant lights of the town.

At last a light appeared on the fjord, then another, then many lights. The old man seized the woman's hand and pressed it, and in silence, under the stars, they thanked God for having safely brought home their son whom they had mourned as dead for a whole year.

It is true, he had not been the leader of the expedition, but he had been one of the crew. And now he was to dine with the king, receive an order, and, in addition to a sum of money from the nation, which

Parliament had voted for the purpose, an appointment which would mean bread and butter for the rest of his life.

The lights grew in size as they approached; a small steamer was towing a big dark craft, which, seen close by, looked as plain and simple as most great things do.

And now the man on the bridge, who had been very busy about the dark object, struck a match.

"Whatever is it?" said the old man, much puzzled. "It looks like huge wax candles."

They went nearer to examine it more closely.

"It looks like a frame for drying fishes," said the old woman, who had been born on the coast.

Ratsh! It—sh! Si-si-si-si! it said, and the old people were instantly surrounded by fire and flames.

Great fiery globes rose up to the skies and, bursting, lit up the night with a shower of stars; an astronomer, observing the heavens with a telescope, might have come to the conclusion that new stars had been born. And he would not have been altogether wrong, for in the year 1880 new thoughts were kindled in new hearts, and new light and new discoveries vouchsafed to mankind. Doubtless, there were weeds, too, growing up together with the splendid wheat; but weeds have their uses, also; shade and moisture depend on their presence, and they will be separated from the wheat at harvest

time. But there must be weeds, they are as inseparable from wheat as chaff is from corn.

What had puzzled the old couple, however, was a rocket frame, and when all the smoke had cleared away—for there is no fire without smoke—not a trace of all the magnificence was left.

" It would have been jolly to have been in town with them to-night," said the old woman.

" Oh, no ! " replied the man. " We should have been in the way, poor people like we ought never to push themselves to the front. And there's plenty of time to-morrow for seeing the boy, after he has left his sweetheart, who is dearer to him now than we are."

It was a very sensible speech for the old man to make ; but who in the world is to have sense, if old people have not ?

And then they continued their way to the town.

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Now, let us see what happened to the son.

He was the leadsman, that is to say, it was his business to sound the depths of the sea ; he had plumbed the profound abysses of the ocean, calculated the elevation of the land and the apparent motion of the sky ; he knew the exact time by looking at the sun, and he could tell from the stars how far they had travelled. He was a man of importance ; he believed that he held heaven and earth in his hand, measured time and regulated the clock of eternity. And after he had been the king's guest

and received an order to wear on his breast, he fancied that he was made of finer stuff than most men ; he was not exactly haughty when he met his poor parents and his sweetheart, but, although they said nothing, they felt that he thought himself their superior. Possibly he was a little stiff, he was built that way.

Well, the official ceremonies were over, but the students also had decided to pay homage to the heroes, who had returned home after a prolonged absence. And they went to the capital in full force.

Students are queer people, who read books and study under Dr. Know-all ; consequently they imagine that they know more than other people. They are also young, and therefore they are thoughtless and cruel.

The respectful and sensible speeches which the old professors had been making all the afternoon in honour of the explorers had come to an end, and the procession of the students had started.

The leadsman and his sweetheart were sitting on a balcony in the company of the other great men. The ringing of the church bells and the booming of the guns mingled with the sound of the bugles and the rolling of the drums ; flags were waving and fluttering in the breeze. And then the procession marched by.

It was headed by a ship, with sailors and everything else belonging to it ; next walruses came and polar bears, and all the rest of it ; then students in

disguise, representing the heroes ; the Great Man himself was represented in his fur coat and goggles. It wasn't quite respectful, of course ; it wasn't a very great honour to be impersonated in this way ; but there it was ! It was well meant, no doubt. And gradually every member of the expedition passed by, one after the other, all represented by the students.

Last of all came the leadsman. It was true, nobody could ever have dreamt of calling him handsome, but there is no need for a man to be handsome, as long as he is an able leadsman, or anything else able. The students had chosen a hideous old grumbler to impersonate him. That alone would not have mattered ; but nature had made one of his arms shorter than the other, and his representative had made a feature of this defect. And that was too bad ; for a defect is something for which one ought not to be blamed.

But when the fool who played the leadsman approached the balcony, he said a few words with a provincial accent, intended to cast ridicule on the leadsman, who was born in one of the provinces. It was a silly thing to do, for every man speaks the dialect which his mother has taught him ; and it is nothing at all to be ashamed of.

Everybody laughed, more from politeness than anything else, for the entertainment was gratuitous, but the girl was hurt, for she hated to see her future husband laughed at. The leadsman frowned and grew silent. He no longer enjoyed the festivities.

But he carefully hid his real feelings, for otherwise he would have been laughed at for a fool unable to appreciate a joke. But still worse things happened, for his impersonator danced and cut all sorts of ridiculous antics, in the endeavour to act the leadsman's name in dumb charade; first his surname, which he had inherited from his father, and then his Christian name, which his mother had chosen for him at his baptism. These names were sacred to him, and although there may have been a little boastful sound about them, he had always scorned to change them.

He wanted to rise from his chair and leave, but his sweetheart caught hold of his hand, and he stayed where he was.

When the procession was over and everybody who had been sitting on the balcony had risen, the great man laid a friendly hand on the girl's shoulder, and said, with his kindly smile :—

" They have a strange way here of celebrating their heroes, one mustn't mind it ! "

In the evening there was a garden party and the leadsman was present, but his pleasure was gone; he had been laughed at, and he had grown small in his own estimation, smaller than the fool, who had made quite a hit as a jester. Therefore he was despondent, felt uneasy at the thought of the future and doubtful of his own capability. And wherever he went he met the fool who was caricaturing him. He saw his faults enlarged, especially his pride and

his boastfulness ; all his secret thoughts and weaknesses were made public.

For three painful hours he examined the account book of his conscience ; what no man had dared to tell him before, the fool had told him. Perfect knowledge of oneself is a splendid thing, Socrates calls it the highest of all goods. Towards the end of the evening the leadsman had conquered himself, admitted his faults, and resolved to turn over a new leaf.

As he was passing a group of people he heard a voice behind a hedge saying :—

" It's extraordinary, how the leadsman has improved. He's really quite a delightful fellow ! "

These words did him good ; but what pleased him more than anying else were a few whispered words from his sweetheart.

" You are so nice to-night," she said, " that you look quite handsome."

He handsome ? It must have been a miracle then, and miracles don't happen nowadays. Yet he had to believe in a miracle, for he knew himself to be a very plain man.

Finally the Great Man touched his glass with his knife, and immediately there was silence, for everybody wanted to hear what he had to say.

" When a Roman conqueror was granted a triumphal procession," he began, " a slave always stood behind him in the chariot and incessantly called out, ' Remember that you are but a man ! '

while senate and people paid him homage. And at the side of the triumphal car, which was drawn by four horses, walked a fool, whose business it was to dim the splendour of his triumph by shouting insults, and casting suspicion on the hero's character by singing libellous songs. This was a good old custom, for there is nothing so fatal to a man than to believe that he is a god, and there is nothing the gods dislike so much as the pride of men. My dear young friends! The success which we, who have just returned home, have achieved, has perhaps been overrated, our triumph went to our heads, and therefore it was good for us to watch your antics to-day! I don't envy the jester his part—far from it; but I thank you for the somewhat strange homage which you have done us. It has taught me that I have still a good deal to learn, and whenever my head is in danger of being turned by flattery, it will remind me that I am nothing but an ordinary man!"

"Hear! hear!" exclaimed the leadsman, and the festivities continued, undisturbed even by the fool, who had felt a little ashamed of himself and had quietly withdrawn from the scene.

So much for the Great Man and the leadsman. Now let us see what happened to the fool.

As he was standing close to the table during the Great Man's speech, he received a glance from the leadsman, which, like a small fiery arrow, was capable of setting a fortress aflame. And as he went out into the night, he felt beside himself, like a man who is

clothed in sheets of fire. He was not a nice man. True, fools and jailers are human beings, like the rest of us, but they are not the very nicest specimens. Like everybody else he had many faults and weaknesses, but he knew how to cloak them. Now something extraordinary happened. Through having mimicked the leadsman all day long, and also, perhaps, owing to all the drink he had consumed, he had become so much the part which he had played that he was unable to shake it off ; and since he had brought into prominence the faults and weaknesses of the leadsman, he had, as it were, acquired them, and that flash from the leadsman's eye had rammed them down to the very bottom of his soul, just as a ramrod pushes the powder into the barrel of a gun. He was charged with the leadsman, so to speak, and therefore, as he stepped out into the street he at once began to shout and boast. But this time luck was against him. A policeman ordered him to be quiet. The fool said something funny, imitating the leadsman's provincial accent. But the policeman, who happened to be a native of the same province, was annoyed and wanted to arrest the fool. Now it is just as difficult for a fool to take a thing seriously as it is for a policeman to understand a joke ; therefore the fool resisted and created such a disturbance that the policeman struck him with his truncheon.

He received a sound beating, and then the policeman let him go.

You would think that he had had enough trouble now—far from it !

The chastisement which he had received had only embittered him, and he went on the warpath, like a red Indian, to see on whom he might avenge his wrongs.

Accident, or some other power, guided his footsteps to a locality mainly frequented by peasants and labourers. He entered a brewery and found a number of millers and farmer's labourers sitting round a table, drinking the health of the explorers. When they saw the fool they took him for the leadsman, and were highly delighted when he condescended to take a glass in their company.

Now the demon of pride entered into the soul of the fool. He boasted of his great achievements ; he told them that it was he who had led the expedition, for would they not have foundered if he had not sounded the depth of the sea ? Would they ever have returned home if he had not read the stars ?

Smack ! an egg hit him between the eyebrows.

" Leadsman, you're a braggart ! " said the miller. " We've known that for a long time ; we knew it when you wrote to the paper saying the Great Man was another Humboldt ! "

Now another of the leadsman's weaknesses gained the upper hand.

" The Great Man is a humbug ! " he exclaimed, which was not true.

This was too much for the assembly. They rose

from their seats like one man, seized the fool, and with a leather strap bound him to a sack of flour. They covered him with flour until he was white from top to toe, and blackened his face with the wick from one of the lanterns. The millers' apprentice sewed him to the sack; they lifted him, sack and lantern, on to the cart, and amid shouting and laughter proceeded to the market-place.

There he was exhibited to the passers-by, and everybody laughed at him.

When they let him go at last, he went and sat on some stone stairs and cried. The big fellow sobbed like a little child; one might almost have felt sorry for him.

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What the Tree-Swallow sang in the Buckthorn Tree

What the Tree-Swallow sang in the Buckthorn Tree

IF you are standing at the harbour where all the steamers call, and look out towards the sea, you will see a mountain on your left, covered with green trees, and behind the trees a large house built in the shape of a spider. For in the centre there is a round building from which radiate eight wings, that look very much like the eight legs on the round body of a spider. The people who enter the house do not leave it again at will, and some of them stay there for the rest of their life, for the house is a prison.

In the days of King Oscar I. the mountain was not green. On the contrary, it was grey and cold, for neither moss nor heart's-ease would grow there, although these plants generally thrive on the bare rock. There was nothing but grey stone and grey people, who looked as if they had been turned into stone, and who quarried stone, broke stone, and carried stone. And among these people there was one who looked stonier than all the others.

He was still a youth when, in the reign of King Oscar I., he was shut up in this prison because he had killed a man.

He was a prisoner for life, and sewn on his grey prison garb was a large black " L."

He was always on the mountain, in winter days and summer time, breaking stones. In the winter he had only the empty and deserted harbour to look at ; the semicircular bridge with its poles had the appearance of a yawning row of teeth, and he could see the wood-shed, the riding-school, and the two gigantic, denuded lime trees. Sometimes an ice-yacht would sail past the islet ; sometimes a few boys would pass on skates ; otherwise it was quiet and forsaken.

In the summer time it was much jollier. For then the harbour was full of smart boats, newly painted and decorated with flags. And the lime trees, in the shade of which he had sat when he was a child, waiting for his father, who was an engineer on one of the finest boats, were green.

It was many years now since he had heard the rustling of the breeze in the trees, for nothing grew on his cliff, and the only thing in the world he longed for was to hear once again the whispering of the wind in the branches of the lime trees at Knights-holm.

Sometimes, on a summer's day, a steamer would pass the islet ; then he heard the plashing of the waves, or, perhaps, snatches of music ; and he saw

bright faces which grew dark as soon as their eyes fell on the grey stone men on the mountain.

And then he cursed heaven and earth, his fate and the cruelty of men. He cursed, year in, year out. And he and his companions tormented and cursed each other day and night; for crime isolates, but misfortune draws men together.

In the beginning his fate was unnecessarily cruel, for the keepers ill-treated the prisoners, mercilessly and at their pleasure.

But one day there was a change; the food was better, the treatment was less harsh, and every prisoner was given a cell of his own to sleep in. The king himself had loosened the chains of the prisoners a little; but since hopelessness had petrified the hearts of these unfortunate men, they were unable to feel anything like gratitude, and so they continued to curse; and now they came to the conclusion that it was more pleasant to sleep together in one room, for then they could talk all night. And they continued to complain of the food, the clothes, and the treatment, just as before.

One fine day all the bells of the town were ringing, and those of Knightsholm rang louder than any of the others. King Oscar was dead, and the prisoners had a holiday. Since they could talk to one another now, they talked of murdering the guards and escaping from prison; and they also talked of the dead king, and they spoke evil of him.

" If he had been a just man, he would have set us free," said one of the prisoners.

" Or else he would have imprisoned all the criminals who are at large."

" Then he himself would have had to be Governor of the Prison, for the whole nation are criminals."

It is the way of prisoners to regard all men as criminals, and to maintain that they themselves were only caught because they were unlucky.

But it was a hot summer's day, and the stone man walked along the shore, listening to the tolling of the bells for Oscar the king. He raised the stones and looked for tadpoles and sticklebacks, but could find none ; not a fish was visible in the water, and consequently there was not a sign of a sea-gull or a tern. Then he felt that a curse rested on the mountain, a curse so strong that it kept even the fishes and the birds away. He fell to considering the life he was leading. He had lost his name, both Christian and surname, and was no more now than No. 65, a name written in figures, instead of in letters. He was no longer obliged to pay taxes. He had forgotten his age. He had ceased to be a man, ceased to be a living being, but neither was he dead. He was nothing but something grey moving on the mountain and being terribly scorched by the sun. It burned on his prison garb and on his head with the close-cropped hair, which in days long passed had been curly, and was combed with a tooth-comb every Saturday by his mother's gentle hand. He was not

allowed to wear a cap to-day, because it would have facilitated an attempt at escape. And as the sun scorched his head, he remembered the story of the prophet Jonah, to whom the Lord gave a gourd so that he might sit in its shade.

" A nice gift, that ! " he sneered, for he did not believe in anything good ; in fact, he did not believe in anything at all.

All at once he saw a huge birch branch tossed about in the surf. It was quite green and fresh and had a white stem; possibly it had fallen off a pleasure-boat. He dragged it ashore, shook the water off and carried it to a gully where he put it up, wedged firmly between three stones. Then he sat down and listened to the wind rustling through its leaves, which smelt of the finest resin.

When he had sat for a little while in the shade of the birch he fell asleep.

And he dreamed a dream.

The whole mountain was a green wood with lovely trees and odorous flowers. Birds were singing, bees and humble-bees buzzing, and butterflies fluttering from flower to flower. But all by itself and a little aside stood a tree which he did not know ; it was more beautiful than all the rest ; it had several stems, like a shrub, and the branches looked like lacework. And on one of its branches, half hidden by its foliage, sat a little black-and-white bird which looked like a swallow, but wasn't one.

In his dream he could interpret the language of the

birds, and therefore he understood to some extent what the bird was singing. And it sang :

Mud, mud, mud, mud here !
We'll throw, throw, throw here !
In mud, mud, mud you died,
From mud, mud, mud you'll rise.

It sang of mud, death, and resurrection ; that much he could make out.

But that was not all. He was standing alone on the cliff in the scorching heat of the sun. All his fellows-in-misfortune had forsaken him and threatened his life, because he had refused to be a party to their setting the prison on fire. They followed him in a crowd, threw stones at him and chased him up the mountain as far as he could go. And finally he was stopped by a stone wall.

There was no possibility of climbing over it, and in his despair he resolved to kill himself by dashing his head against the stones. He rushed down the mountain, and behold ! a gate was opened at the same moment—a green garden gate . . . and . . . he woke up.

When he thought of his life and realised that the green wood was nothing but the branch of a birch tree, he grew very discontented in his heart.

" If at least it had been a lime tree," he grumbled.

And as he listened he found that it was the birch which had sung so loudly ; it sounded as if some one were sifting sand or gravel, and again he thought of

the lime trees, which make the soft velvety sounds that touch the heart.

On the following day his birch was faded and gave little shade.

On the day after that the foliage was as dry as paper and rattled like teeth. And finally there was nothing left but a huge birch rod, which reminded him of his childhood.

He remembered the gourd of the prophet Jonah, and he cursed when the sun scorched his head.

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A new king had come to the throne, and he brought fresh life into the government of the country. The town was to have a new watercourse, and therefore all the prisoners were commanded to dredge.

It was for the first time after many years that he was allowed to leave his cliff. He was in the boat, swimming on the water, and saw much in his native town that was new to him ; he saw the railway and the locomotive. And they began dredging just below the railway station.

And gradually they brought up all the corruption which lay buried at the bottom of the sea. Drowned cats, old shoes, decomposed fat from the candle factory, the refuse from the dye works called " The Blue Hand," tanners' bark from the tannery, and all the human misery which the laundresses had batted off the clothes for the last hundred years. And there was such a terrible smell of sulphur and ammonia that only a prisoner could be expected to bear it.

When the boat was full, the prisoners wondered what was going to be done with their cargo of dirt ? The riddle was solved when the overseer steered for their own cliff.

All the mud was unloaded there and thrown on the mountain, and soon the air was filled with the foulest of smells. They waded ankle-deep in filth, and their clothes, hands, and faces were covered with it.

" This is like the infernal regions ! " said the prisoners.

They dredged and unloaded on the cliff for several years, and ultimately the cliff disappeared altogether.

And the white snow fell winter after winter on all the corruption and threw a pure white cover over it.

And when the spring came once again and all the snow had melted, the evil smell had disappeared, and the mud looked like mould. There was no more dredging after this spring, and our stone man was sent to work at the forge and never came near the cliff. Only once, in the autumn, he went there secretly, and then he saw something wonderful.

The ground was covered with green plants. Ugly sappy plants, it was true, mostly bur-marigolds, that look like a nettle with brown flowers, which is ugly because flowers should be white, yellow, blue or red. And there were true nettles with green blossoms, and burs, sorrel, thistles, and notch-weed ; all the ugliest, burning, stinging, evil-smelling plants, which nobody likes, and which grow on dust-heaps, waste land, and mud.

" We cleaned the bottom of the sea, and now we have all the dirt here ; this is all the thanks we get ! " said the prisoner.

Then he was transferred to another cliff, where a fort was to be built, and again he worked in stone ; stone, stone, stone !

Then he lost one of his eyes, and sometimes he was flogged. And he remained a very long time there, so long that the new king died and was followed by his successor. On coronation day one of the prisoners was to be released. And it was to be the one who had behaved best during all the time and had arrived at a clear understanding that he had sinned. And that was he ! But the other prisoners considered that it would be a wrong towards them, for in their circles a man who repents is considered a fool, " because he has done what he couldn't help doing."

And so the years passed. Our stone man had grown very old, and because he was now unable to do hard work, he was sent back to his cliff and set to sew sacks.

One day the chaplain on his round paused before the stone man, who sat and sewed.

" Well," said the clergyman, " and are you never to leave this cliff ? "

" How would that be possible ? " replied the stone man.

" You will go as soon as you come to see that you did wrong."

" If ever I find a human being who does not only do right, but more than is right, I will believe that I did wrong ! But I don't believe that there is such a being."

" To do more than that which is right is to have compassion. May it please God that you will soon come to know it ! "

One day the stone man was sent to repair the road on the cliff, which he had not seen for, perhaps, twenty years.

It was again a warm summer's day, and from the passing steamers, bright and beautiful as butterflies, came the sounds of music and gay laughter.

When he arrived at the headland he found that the cliff had disappeared under a lovely green wood, whose millions of leaves glittered and sparkled in the breeze like small waves. There were tall, white birch trees and trembling aspens, and ash trees grew on the shore.

Everything was just as it had been in his dream. At the foot of the trees tall grasses nodded, butterflies played in the sunshine, and humble-bees buzzed from flower to flower. The birds were singing, but he could not understand what they said, and therefore he knew that it was not a dream.

The cursed mountain had been transformed into a mountain of bliss, and he could not help thinking of the prophet and the gourd.

" This is mercy and compassion," whispered a voice in his heart, or perhaps it was a warning.

And when a steamer passed, the faces of the passengers did not grow gloomy, but brightened at the sight of the beautiful scenery; he even fancied that he saw some one wave a handkerchief, as people on a steamer do when they pass a summer resort.

He walked along a path beneath waving trees. It is true, there was not one lime tree; but he did not dare to wish for one, for fear the birches might turn into rods. He had learnt that much.

As he walked through a leafy avenue, he saw in the distance a white wall with a green gate. And somebody was playing on an instrument which was not an organ, for the movement was much jollier and livelier. Above the wall the pretty roof of a villa was visible, and a yellow and blue flag fluttered in the wind.

And he saw a gaily coloured ball rise and fall on the other side of the wall; he heard the chattering of children's voices, and the clinking of plates and glasses told him that a table was being laid.

He went and looked through the gate. The syringa was in full flower, and the table stood under the flowering shrubs; children were running about, the piano was being played and somebody sang a song.

"This is Paradise," said the voice within him.

The old man stood a long time and watched, so long that in the end he broke down, overcome by fatigue, hunger, and thirst, and all the misery of life.

Then the gate was opened and a little girl in a white dress came out. She carried a silver tray in her hand, and on the tray stood a glass filled with wine, the reddest wine which the old man had ever seen. And the child went up to the old man and said :

" Come now, daddy, you must drink this ! "

The old man took the glass and drank. It was the rich man's wine, which had grown a long way off in the sunny South ; and it tasted like the sweetness of a good life when it is at its very best.

" This is compassion," said his own old broken voice. " But you, child, in your ignorance, you wouldn't have brought me this wine if you had known who I am. Do you know what I am ? "

" Yes, you are a prisoner, I know that," replied the little girl.

When the old stone man went back, he was no longer a man of stone, for something in him had begun to quicken.

And as he passed a steep incline, he saw a tree with many trunks, which looked like a shrub. It was more beautiful than the others ; it was a buckthorn tree, but the old man did not know it. A restless little bird, black and white like a swallow, fluttered from branch to branch. The peasants call

it tree-swallow, but its name is something else. And it sat in the foliage and sang a sweet sad song:

In mud, in mud, in mud you died,
From mud, from mud, from mud you rose.

It was exactly as it had been in his dream. And now the old man understood what the tree-swallow meant.

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The Mystery of the Tobacco Shed

The Mystery of the Tobacco Shed

LISTEN to the story of a young opera-singer who was so beautiful that the people in the street turned round to stare at her when she passed. And she was not only very beautiful, but she had a better voice than most singers.

The conductor of the orchestra, who was also a composer, came and laid his heart and all his possessions at her feet. She took his possessions, but left his heart lying in the dust.

Now she was famous, more famous than any other singer; she drove through the streets in her elegant victoria, and nodded to her portrait, which greeted her from all the stationers' and booksellers' shop windows.

And as her fame grew, her picture appeared on post-cards, soap and cigar boxes. Finally her portrait was hung up in the foyer of the theatre, amongst all the dead immortals; and as a result her head began to swell.

One day she was standing on a pier, the sea was very rough and there was a strong current. The conductor, of course, stood by her side, and a great many young men were present, paying her court. The beauty was playing with a rose ; all the cavaliers coveted the flower, but she said that it should become the property of him who knew how to earn it, and she flung it far out into the sea. The cavaliers looked at it with longing glances, but the conductor jumped off the pier without a moment's hesitation, swam like a sea-gull on the crests of the waves and soon held the flower between his lips.

The cavaliers cheered, and the swimmer could read the promise of love in his lady's eyes. But when he struck out for the shore, he found that he could not move from the spot. He had been caught in the current. The singer on the pier did not realise his danger, but merely thought he was fooling, and therefore she laughed. But the conductor, who saw death staring him in the face, misunderstood her laughter ; a bitter pang shot through his heart, and then his love for her was dead.

However, he came ashore at last, with bleeding hands, for he had cut them at the pier in many places.

" I will marry you," said the beauty.

" No, thank you," replied the conductor ; turned, and walked away.

This was an offence for which she swore that she would be revenged.

Only the people connected with the theatre, who

understand these things, know how it happened that the conductor lost his post. He had been firmly established, and it took two years to get rid of him.

But he was got rid of; she watched the downfall of her benefactor and triumphed, and her head swelled still more, in fact it swelled so much that everybody noticed it. The public, who realised that the heart underneath the beautiful form was wicked, ceased to be touched by her singing, and no longer believed in her smiles and tears.

She soon became aware of it, and it embittered her. But she continued ruling at the theatre, suppressed all young talents, and used her influence with the press to ruin their careers.

She lost the love and respect of her audiences, but she did not mind that as long as she remained in power; and as she was wealthy, influential, and contented, she throve and prospered.

Now, when people are prosperous, they do not lose flesh; on the contrary, they are inclined to grow stout; and she really began to grow corpulent. It came so gradually that she had no idea of it until it was too late. Bang! The downhill journey is ever a fast journey, and in her case it was accomplished with startling rapidity. She tried every remedy—in vain! She kept the best table in the whole town, but she starved herself, and the more she starved, the stouter she grew.

One more year, and she was no longer a great star, and her pay was reduced. Two more years and she

was half forgotten, and her place was filled by others. After the third year she was not re-engaged, and she went and rented an attic.

" She is suffering from an unnatural corpulency," said the stage-manager to the prompter.

" It's not corpulency at all," replied the prompter, " she's just puffed up with pride."

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Now she lived in the attic and looked out on a large plantation. In the middle of this plantation stood a tobacco shed, which pleased her, because it had no windows behind which curious people could sit and stare at her. Sparrows had built their nests under the eaves, but the shed was no longer used for drying or storing tobacco, which was not, now, grown on the plantation.

There she lived during the summer, looking at the shed and wondering what purpose it could possibly serve, for the doors were locked with large padlocks, and nobody ever went in or out.

She knew that it contained secrets, and what these secrets were, she was to learn sooner than she expected.

A few little shreds of her great reputation, to which she clung desperately, and which helped her to bear her life, were still left : the memory of her best parts, Carmen and Aida, for which no successor had yet been found ; the public still remembered her impersonation of these parts, which had been beyond praise.

Very well, August came ; the street lamps were again lighted in the evenings, and the theatres were reopened.

The singer sat at her window and looked at the tobacco shed, which had been painted a bright red, and, moreover, had just received a new red-tiled roof.

A man walked across the potato field ; he carried a large rusty key, with which he opened the shed and went in.

Then two other men arrived ; two men whom she thought she had seen before ; and they, too, disappeared in the shed.

It began to be interesting.

After a while the three men reappeared, carrying large, strange objects, which looked like the bottom of a bed or a big screen.

When they had passed the gate, they turned the screens round and leaned them against the wall ; one of them represented a badly painted tiled stove, another the door of a country cottage, perhaps a forester's cottage. Others a wood, a window, and a library.

She understood. It was the scenery of a play. And after a while she recognised the rose tree from *Faust.*

The shed was used by the theatre for storing scenes and stage properties ; she herself had more than once stood by the side of the rose tree, singing " Gentle flowers in the dew."

The thought that they were going to play *Faust* wrung her heart, but she had one little comfort: she had never sung the principal part in it, for the principal part is Margaret's.

"I don't mind *Faust*; but I shall die if they play *Carmen* or *Aida*."

And she sat and watched the change in the repertoire. She knew a fortnight before the papers what was going to be played next. It was amusing in a way. She knew when the *Freischütz* was going to be played, for she saw the wolves' den being brought out; she knew when they were going to put on the *Flying Dutchman*, for the ship and the sea came out of the shed; and *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin*, and many others.

But the inevitable day dawned—for the inevitable must happen. The men had again gone into the shed (she remembered that the name of one of them was Lindquist, and that it was his business to look after the pulleys), and presently reappeared with a Spanish market-place. The scene was not standing straight up, so that she could not see at once what it was, but one of the men turned it slowly over, and when he stood it up on its side she could see the back, which is always very ugly. And one after the other, slowly, as if they wanted to prolong the torture, huge, black letters appeared: CARMEN. It was *Carmen*!

"I shall die," said the singer.

But she did not die, not even when they played

Aida. But her name was blotted out from the memory of the public, her picture disappeared from the stationers' windows, and from the post-cards; finally her portrait was removed from the foyer of the theatre by an unknown hand.

She could not understand how men could forget so quickly. It was quite inexplicable! But she mourned for herself as if she were mourning a friend who had died; and wasn't it true, that the singer, the famous singer, was dead?

One evening she was strolling through a deserted street. At one end of the street was a rubbish shoot. Without knowing why, she stood still, and then she had an object lesson on the futility of all earthly things. For on the rubbish heap lay a post-card, and on the post-card was her picture in the part of Carmen.

She walked away quickly, suppressing her tears. She came to a little side street, and stopped before a stationer's shop. It had been her custom to look at the shop windows to see whether her portrait was exhibited. But it was not exhibited here; instead of that her eyes fell on a text and she read it, unconsciously:

"The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth."

Them that do evil! That was the reason why her memory was blotted out. That was the explanation of the forgetfulness of men.

"But is it not possible to undo the wrong I have

done ? " she moaned. " Have I not been sufficiently punished ? "

And she wandered in the direction of the wood, where she was not likely to meet anybody. And as she was walking along, crushed, humiliated, her heart full of despair, she met another lonely being, who stopped her as she was going to pass him. His eyes begged permission to speak to her.

It was the conductor. But his eyes did not reproach her, nor did they pity her, they only expressed admiration,—admiration and tenderness.

" How beautiful and slender you have grown, Hannah," he said.

She looked at herself, and she could not help admitting that he was right. Grief had burnt all her superfluous fat, and she was more beautiful than she had ever been.

" And you look as young as ever ! Younger ! "

It was the first kind word which she had heard for many a day ; and since it had been spoken by him whom she had wronged, she realised what a splendid character he had, and said so.

" I hope you haven't lost your voice ? " asked the conductor, who could not bear flattery.

" I don't know," she sobbed.

" Come to me to-morrow . . . yes, come to the Opera-house, and then we shall see. I am conducting there. . . ."

The singer went, not once or twice, but many times, and regained her former position.

The public had forgiven and forgotten all the evil she had done. And she became greater and more famous than she had been before.

Isn't that an edifying story ?

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The Story of the St. Gotthard

The Story of the St. Gotthard

IT was Saturday night in Göschenen, in the canton of Uri, that part of Switzerland which William Tell and Walter Fürst have made famous. The pretty green village on the northern side of the St. Gotthard is situated on a little stream which drives a mill-wheel and contains trout. Quiet, kindly people live there, who speak the German language and have home rule, and the "sacred wood" protects their homes from avalanche and landslip.

On the Saturday night I am speaking of, all the folks were gathering round the village pump, underneath the great walnut tree, at the hour when the church bells were ringing the Angelus. The postmaster, the magistrate, and the colonel were there, all in their shirt-sleeves and carrying scythes. They had been mowing all day long, and had come to the pump to wash their scythes, for in the little village work was sacred and every man was his own servant. Then the young men came trooping through the village street, carrying scythes too, and the maids with their milk-pails; finally the cows, a gigantic

breed, every cow as big as a bull. The country is rich and fertile, but it bears neither wine nor olives, neither the mulberry tree nor the luxurious maize. Nothing but green grass and golden corn, the walnut tree and the luscious beet-root grow there.

At the foot of the steep wall of the St. Gotthard, close to the pump, stood the inn, "The Golden Horse." All the tired men, regardless of rank or position, were sitting at a long table in the garden, not one of them was missing: the magistrate, the postmaster, the colonel and the farmers' labourers; the straw-hat manufacturer and his workmen, the little village shoemaker, and the schoolmaster, they were all there.

They talked of cattle breeding and harvest time; they sang songs, reminiscent in their simplicity of cowbells and the shepherd's flute. They sang of the spring and its pure joys, of its promise and its hope. And they drank the golden beer.

After a while the young men rose to play, to wrestle and to jump, for on the following day was the annual festival of the Rifle Club, and there would be trials of strength, and competitions; it was important therefore that their limbs should be supple.

And at an early hour that night the whole village was in bed, for no man must be late on the morning of the festival, and no one must be sleepy or dull. The honour of the village was involved.

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It was Sunday morning; the sun was shining

brightly and the church bells were ringing. Men and women from the neighbouring villages, in their best Sunday clothes, were gathering on the village green, and all of them looked happy and very wide awake. Nearly every man carried a gun instead of the scythe; and matrons and maids looked at the men with scrutinising and encouraging eyes, for it was for the defence of their country and their homes that they had learned to handle a gun; and to-night the best shot would have the honour of opening the dance with the prettiest girl of the village.

A large waggon, drawn by four horses, gaily decorated with flowers and ribbons, drew up; the whole waggon had been transformed into a summer arbour; one could not see the people inside, but one could hear their songs. They sang of Switzerland and the Swiss people, the most beautiful country and the bravest people in the world.

Behind the waggon walked the children's procession. They went by twos, hand in hand, like good friends or little brides and bridegrooms.

And with the pealing of bells the procession slowly wound up the mountain to the church.

After divine service the festivities began, and very soon shots were fired on the rifle-range, which was built against the rocky wall of the St. Gotthard.

The postmaster's son was the best shot in the village, and nobody doubted that he would win the prize. He hit the bull's-eye four times out of six.

From the summit of the mountain came a halloo-

ing and a crashing ; stones and gravel rolled down the precipice, and the fir trees in the sacred wood rocked as if a gale were blowing. On the top of a cliff, his rifle slung across his shoulders, frantically waving his hat, appeared the wild chamois hunter Andrea of Airolo, an Italian village on the other side of the mountain.

" Don't go into the wood ! " screamed the riflemen.

Andrea did not understand.

" Don't go into the sacred wood," shouted the magistrate, " or the mountain will fall on us ! "

" Let it fall, then," shouted Andrea, running down the cliff with incredible rapidity.

" Here I am ! "

" You're too late ! " exclaimed the magistrate.

" I have never been too late yet ! " replied Andrea; went to the shooting-range, raised his rifle six times to his cheek, and each time hit the bull's-eye.

Now, he really was the best shot, but the club had its regulations, and, moreover, the dark-skinned men from the other side of the mountain, where the wine grew and the silk was spun, were not very popular. An old feud raged between them and the men of Göschenen, and the newcomer was disqualified.

But Andrea approached the prettiest girl in the grounds, who happened to be the magistrate's own daughter, and politely asked her to open the dance with him.

Pretty Gertrude blushed, for she was fond of Andrea, but she was obliged to refuse his request.

Andrea frowned, bowed and whispered words into her ear, which covered her face with crimson.

" You shall be my wife," he said, " even if I have to wait ten years for you. I have walked eight hours across the mountain to meet you ; that is why I am so late ; next time I shall be in good time, even if I should have to walk right through the mountain itself."

The festivities were over. All the riflemen were sitting in " The Golden Horse," Andrea in the midst of them. Rudi, the son of the postmaster, sat at the head of the table, because he was the prize-winner according to the regulations, even if Andrea was the best shot in reality.

Rudi was in a teasing mood.

" Well, Andrea," he said, " we all know you for a mighty hunter ; but, you know, it's easier to shoot a chamois than to carry it home."

" If I shoot a chamois I carry it home," replied Andrea.

" Maybe you do ! But everybody here has had a shot at Barbarossa's ring, although nobody has won it yet ! " answered Rudi.

"What is that about Barbarossa's ring ? " asked a stranger who had never been in Göschenen.

" That's Barbarossa's ring, over there," said Rudi.

He pointed to the side of the mountain, where a large copper ring hung on a hook, and went on :

"This is the road by which King Frederick Barbarossa used to travel to Italy; he travelled over it six times, and was crowned both in Milan and in Rome. And as this made him German-Roman emperor, he caused this ring to be hung up on the mountain, in remembrance of his having wedded Germany to Italy. And if this ring, so goes the saying, can be lifted off its hook, then the marriage, which was not a happy one, will be annulled."

"Then I will annul it," said Andrea. "I will break the bonds as my fathers broke the bonds which bound my poor country to the tyrants of Schwyz, Uri, and Unterwalden."

"Are you not a Swiss, yourself?" asked the magistrate severely.

"No, I am an Italian of the Swiss Confederation."

He slipped an iron bullet into his gun, took aim and shot.

The ring was lifted from below and jerked off the hook. Barbarossa's ring lay at their feet.

"Long live Italy!" shouted Andrea, throwing his hat into the air.

Nobody said a word.

Andrea picked up the ring, handed it to the magistrate and said:

"Keep this ring in memory of me and this day, on which you did me a wrong."

He seized Gertrude's hand and kissed it; climbed up the mountain and disappeared; was seen again and vanished in a cloud. After a while he re-

appeared, high above them; but this time it was merely his gigantic shadow thrown on a cloud. And there he stood, shaking a threatening fist at the village.

"That was Satan himself," said the colonel.

"No, it was an Italian," said the postmaster.

"Since it is late in the evening," said the magistrate, "I'll tell you an official secret, which will be read in all the papers to-morrow."

"Hear! hear!"

"We have received information that when it became known that the Emperor of France was made a prisoner at Sedan, the Italians drove the French troops out of Rome, and that Victor Emanuel is at this moment on his way to the capital."

"This is great news. It puts an end to Germany's dreams of promenades to Rome. Andrea must have known about it when he boasted so much."

"He must have known more," said the magistrate.

"What? What?"

"Wait, and you'll see."

And they saw.

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One day strangers came and carefully examined the mountain through their field-glasses. It looked as if they were gazing at the place where Barbarossa's ring had hung, for that was the spot at which they directed their glasses. And then they consulted the

compass, as if they did not know which was the North and which was the South.

There was a big dinner at "The Golden Horse," at which the magistrate was present. At dessert they talked of millions and millions of money.

A short time after "The Golden Horse" was pulled down; next came the church, which was taken down piece by piece and built up again on another spot; half the village was razed to the ground; barracks were built, the course of the stream deflected, the mill-wheel taken away, the factory closed, the cattle sold.

And then three thousand Italian-speaking labourers with dark hair and olive skins arrived on the scene.

The beautiful old songs of Switzerland and the pure joys of spring were heard no more.

Instead of that, the sound of hammering could be heard day and night. A jumper was driven into the mountain at the exact spot where Barbarossa's ring had hung; and then the blasting began.

It would not have been so very difficult (as everybody knew) to make a hole through the mountain, but it was intended to make two holes, one on each side, and the two holes were to meet in the middle; nobody believed that this was possible, for the tunnel was to be nearly nine miles long. Nearly nine miles!

And what would happen if they did not meet? Well, they would have to begin again at the beginning.

But the engineer-in-chief had assured them that they would meet.

Andrea, on the Italian side, had faith in the engineer-in-chief, and since he was himself a very capable fellow, as we know, he applied for work under him and soon was made a foreman.

Andrea liked his work. He no longer saw daylight, the green fields and snow-clad Alps. But he fancied that he was cutting a way for himself through the mountain to Gertrude, the way which he had boasted he would come.

For eight years he stood in darkness, living the life of a dog, stripped to the waist, for he was working in a temperature of a hundred degrees. Now the way was blocked by a spring, and he had to work standing in the water ; now by a deposit of loam, and he stood almost knee-deep in the mire ; the atmosphere was nearly always foul, and many of his fellow-labourers succumbed to it ; but new ones were ever ready to take their place. Finally Andrea, too, succumbed, and was taken into the hospital. He was tortured by the idea that the two tunnels would never meet. Supposing they never met !

There were also men from the other side in the hospital ; and at times, when they were not delirious, they would ask one another the all-absorbing question : " Would they meet ? "

The people from the South had never before been so anxious to meet the people from the North as they were now, deep down in the heart of the moun-

tain. They knew that if they met, their feud of over a thousand years' standing would be over, and they would fall into each other's arms, reconciled.

Andrea recovered and returned to work ; he was in the strike of 1875, threw a stone, and underwent a term of imprisonment.

In the year 1877 his native village, Airolo, was destroyed by fire.

" Now I have burnt my boats behind me," he said, " there is no going back—I must go on."

The 19th of July 1879 was a day of mourning. The engineer-in-chief had gone into the mountain to measure and to calculate ; and, all absorbed in his work, he had had a stroke and died. Died with his race only half run ! He ought to have been buried where he fell, in a more gigantic stone pyramid than any of the Egyptian Pharaohs had built for themselves, and his name, Favre, should have been carved into the stone.

However, time passed, Andrea gained money, experience, and strength. He never went to Göschenen, but once a year he went to the " sacred wood " to contemplate the devastation, as he said.

He never saw Gertrude, never sent her a letter ; there was no need for it, he was always with her in his thoughts, and he felt that her will was his.

In the seventh year the magistrate died, in poverty.

" What a lucky thing that he died a poor man,"

thought Andrea; and there are not many sons-in-law who would think like that.

In the eighth year something extraordinary happened; Andrea, foremost man on the Italian side of the tunnel, was hard at work, beating on his jumper. There was scarcely any air; he felt suffocated, and suffered from a disagreeable buzzing in his ears. Suddenly he heard a ticking, which sounded like the ticking of a wood-worm, whom people call "the death-watch."

"Has my last hour come?" he said, thinking aloud.

"Your last hour!" replied a voice; he did not know whether it was within or without him, but he felt afraid.

On the next day he again heard the ticking, but more distinctly, so that he came to the conclusion that it must be his watch.

But on the third day, which was a holiday, he heard nothing; and now he believed that it must have been something supernatural; he was afraid and went to mass, and in his heart he deplored the futility of life. He would never see the great day, never win the prize offered to the man who would first walk through the dividing wall, never win Gertrude.

On the Monday, however, he was again the foremost of the men in the tunnel, but he felt despondent, for he no longer believed that they would meet the Germans in the mountain.

He beat and hammered, but without enthusiasm, slowly, as his weakened heart was beating after the tunnel-sickness. All of a sudden he heard something like a shot and a tremendous crashing noise inside the mountain on the other side.

And now a light burst on him ; they had met.

He fell on his knees and thanked God. And then he arose and began to work. He worked during breakfast, during dinner, during recreation time, and during supper. When his right arm was lame with exertion, he worked with the left one. He thought of the engineer-in-chief, who had been struck down before the wall of rock ; he sang the song of the three men in the fiery furnace, for it seemed to him that the air around him was red-hot, while the perspiration dropped from his forehead, and his feet stood in the mire.

On the stroke of seven, on the 28th of January, he fell forward on his jumper, which pierced the wall right through. Loud cheering from the other side roused him, and he understood ; he realised that they had met, that his troubles were over, and that he was the winner of ten thousand lire.

After a sigh of thanksgiving to the All-Merciful God, he pressed his lips to the bore-hole and whispered the name of Gertrude ; and then he called for three times three cheers for the Germans.

At eleven o'clock at night, there were shouts of "attention!" on the Italian side, and with a

thunderous crash, a noise like the booming of cannon at a siege, the wall fell down. Germans and Italians embraced one another and wept, and all fell on their knees and sang the "Te Deum laudamus."

It was a great moment; it was in 1880, the year in which Stanley's work in Africa was done, and Nordensköld had accomplished his task.

When they had sung the "Te Deum" a German workman stepped forward and handed to the Italians a beautifully got-up parchment. It was a record and an appreciation of the services of the engineer-in-chief, Louis Favre.

He was to be the first man to pass through the tunnel, and Andrea was appointed to carry the memorial and his name by the little workmen's train to Airolo.

And Andrea accomplished his mission faithfully, sitting before the locomotive on a barrow.

Yes, it was a great day, and the night was no less great.

They drank wine in Airolo, Italian wine, and let off fireworks. They made speeches on Louis Favre, Stanley, and Nordensköld; they made a speech on the St. Gotthard, which, for thousands of years had been a barrier between Germany and Italy, between the North and the South. A barrier it had been, and at the same time a uniter, honestly dividing its waters between the German Rhine, the French Rhone, the North Sea and the Mediterranean. . . .

"And the Adriatic," interrupted a man from Tessin. "Don't forget the Ticino, which is a tributary to the largest river of Italy, the mighty Po. . . ."

"Bravo! That's better still! Three cheers for the St. Gotthard, the great Germany, the free Italy, and the new France!"

It was a great night, following a great day.

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On the following morning Andrea called at the Engineering Offices. He wore his Italian shooting-dress; an eagle's feather ornamented his hat, and a gun and a knapsack were slung across his shoulders. His face and his hands were white.

"So you have done with the tunnel," said the cashier, or the "moneyman," as they called him. "Well, nobody can blame you for it, for what remains to be done is mason's work. To your account, then!"

The moneyman opened a book, wrote something on a piece of paper, and handed Andrea ten thousand lire in gold.

Andrea signed his name, put the gold into his knapsack and went.

He jumped into a workman's train, and in ten minutes he had arrived at the fallen barrier. There were fires burning in the mountain, the workmen cheered when they saw him and waved their caps. It was splendid!

Ten more minutes and he was at the Swiss side. When he saw the daylight shining through the

entrance to the tunnel, the train stopped and he got out.

He walked towards the green light, and came to the village and the green world, bathed in sunlight; the village had been rebuilt and looked prettier than before. And when the workmen saw him they saluted their first man.

He went straight up to a little house, and there, under a walnut tree, by the side of the bee-hives, stood Gertrude, calm, and a hundred times more beautiful and gentle. It looked as if she had stood there for eight years, waiting for him.

"Now I have come," he said, "as I intended to come! Will you follow me to my country?"

"I will follow you wherever you go!"

"I gave you a ring long ago; have you still got it?"

"I have it still!"

"Then let us go at once! No, don't turn back! Don't take anything with you!"

And they went away, hand in hand, but not through the tunnel.

"On to the mountain!" said Andrea, turning in the direction of the old pass; through darkness I came to you, but in light I will live with you and for you!"

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The Story of Jubal who had no "I"

The Story of Jubal who had no "I"

ONCE upon a time there was a king whose name was John Lackland, and it is not difficult to imagine the reason why.

But another time there lived a great singer who was called "Jubal, who had no I," and I am now going to tell you the reason.

The name which he had inherited from his father, ~~a soldier,~~ was Peal, and undeniably there was music in the name. But nature had also given him a strong will, which stiffened his back like an iron bar, and that is a splendid gift, quite invaluable in the struggle for an existence. When he was still a baby, only just able to stammer a few words, he would never refer to his own little person as "he," as other babies do, but from the very first he spoke of himself as "I." You have no "I," said his parents. When he grew older, he expressed every little want or desire by "I will." But then his father said to him, "You have no will," and "Your will grows in the wood."

It was very foolish of the soldier, but he knew no better; he had learned to will only what he was ordered to do.

Young Peal thought it strange that he should be supposed to have no will when he had such a very strong one, but he let it pass.

When he had grown into a fine, strong youth, his father said to him one day, "What trade will you learn?"

The boy did not know; he had ceased to will anything, because he was forbidden to do so. It is true, he had a leaning towards music, but he did not dare to say so, for he was convinced that his parents would not allow him to become a musician. Therefore, being an obedient son, he replied, "I don't will anything."

"Then you shall be a tapster," said the father.

Whether it was because the father knew a tapster, or because wine had a peculiar attraction for him, is a matter of indifference. It is quite enough to know that young Peal was sent to the wine vaults, and he might have fared a good deal worse.

There was a lovely smell of sealing-wax and French wine in the cellars, and they were large and had vaulted roofs, like churches. When he sat at the casks and tapped the red wine, his heart was filled with gladness, and he sang, in an undertone at first, all sorts of tunes which he had picked up.

His master, to whom wine spelt life, loved song and gaiety, and never dreamed of stopping his

singing ; it sounded so well in the vaults, and, moreover, it attracted customers, which was a splendid thing from the master's point of view.

One day a commercial traveller dropped in ; he had started life as an opera-singer, and when he heard Peal, he was so delighted with him that he invited him to dinner.

They played nine-pins, ate crabs with dill, drank punch, and, above everything, sang songs. Between two songs, and after they had sworn eternal friendship, the commercial traveller said :

" Why don't you go on the stage ? "

" I ? " answered Peal, " how could I do that ? "

" All you have to do is to say ' I will.' "

This was a new doctrine, for since his third year young Peal had not used the words " I " and " will." He had trained himself to neither wish nor will, and he begged his friend not to lead him into temptation.

But the commercial traveller came again ; he came many times, and once he was accompanied by a famous singer ; and one evening Peal, after much applause from a professor of singing, took his fate into his own hands.

He said good-bye to his master, and over a glass of wine heartily thanked his friend, the commercial traveller, for having given him self-confidence and will, — " will, that iron bar, which keeps a man's back erect and prevents him from grovelling on all fours." And he swore a solemn oath never to forget

his friend, who had taught him to have faith in himself.

Then he went to say good-bye to his parents.

" I will be a singer," he said in a loud voice, which echoed through the room.

The father glanced at the horse-whip, and the mother cried ; but it was no use.

" Don't lose yourself, my darling boy," were the mother's last words.

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Young Peal managed to raise enough money to enable him to go abroad. There he learned singing according to all the rules of the art, and in a few years' time he was a very great singer indeed. He earned much money and travelled with his own impresario.

Peal was prospering now and found no difficulty in saying " I will," or even " I command." His " I " grew to gigantic proportions, and he suffered no other " I's " near him. He denied himself nothing, and did not put his light under a bushel. But now, as he was about to return to his own country, his impresario told him that no man could be a great singer and at the same time be called Peal ; he advised him to adopt a more elegant name, a foreign name by preference, for that was the fashion.

The great man fought an inward struggle, for it is not a very nice thing to change one's name ; it looks as if one were ashamed of one's father and mother, and is apt to create a bad impression.

But hearing that it was the fashion, he let it pass.

He opened his Bible to look for a name, for the Bible is the very best book for the purpose.

And when he came to Jubal, " who was the son of Lamech, and the father of all such as handle the harp and organ," he considered that he could not do better. The impresario, who was an Englishman, suggested that he should call himself Mr. Jubal, and Peal agreed. Henceforth he was Mr. Jubal.

It was all quite harmless, of course, since it was the fashion, but it was nevertheless a strange thing : with the new name Peal had changed his nature. His past was blotted out. Mr. Jubal looked upon himself as an Englishman born and bred, spoke with a foreign accent, grew side-whiskers and wore very high collars ; a checked suit grew round him as the bark grows round a tree, apparently without any effort on his part. He carried himself stiffly, and when he met a friend in the street he acknowledged his friendly bow with the flicker of an eyelid. He never turned round if anybody called after him, and he always stood right in the middle of a street car.

He hardly knew himself.

He was now at home again, in his own country, and engaged to sing at the Opera-house. He played kings and prophets, heroes and demons, and he was so good an actor that whenever he rehearsed a part, he instantly became the part he impersonated.

One day he was strolling along the street. He was playing some sort of a demon, but he was also Mr.

Jubal. Suddenly he heard a voice calling after him, "Peal!" He did not turn round, for no Englishman would do such a thing, and, moreover, his name was no longer Peal.

But the voice called again, "Peal!" and his friend, the commercial traveller, stood before him, looking at him searchingly, and yet with an expression of shy kindliness.

"Dear old Peal, it *is* you!" he said.

Mr. Jubal felt that a demon was taking possession of him; he opened his mouth so wide that he showed all his teeth, and bellowed a curt "No!"

Then his friend felt quite convinced that it was he and went away. He was an enlightened man, who knew men, the world and himself inside out, and therefore he was neither sorry nor astonished.

But Mr. Jubal thought he was; he heard a voice within him saying, "Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice," and he did what St. Peter had done, he went away and wept bitterly. That is to say, he wept in imagination, but the demon in his heart laughed.

Henceforth he was always laughing; he laughed at good and evil, sorrow and disgrace, at everything and everybody.

His father and mother knew, from the papers, who Mr. Jubal really was, but they never went to the Opera-house, for they fancied it had something to do with hoops and horses, and they objected to seeing their son in such surroundings.

Mr. Jubal was now the greatest living singer ; he had lost a lot of his " I," but he still had his will.

Then his day came. There was a little ballet-dancer who could bewitch men, and she bewitched Jubal. She bewitched him to such an extent that he asked her whether he might be hers. (He meant, of course, whether she would be his, but the other is a more polite way of expressing it.)

" You shall be mine," said the sorceress, " if I may take you."

" You may do anything you like," replied Jubal.

The girl took him at his word and they married. First of all he taught her to sing and play, and then he gave her everything she asked for. But since she was a sorceress, she always wanted the things which he most objected to giving to her, and so, gradually, she wrested his will from him and made him her slave.

One fine day Mrs. Jubal had become a great singer, so great that when the audience called " Jubal ! " it was not Mr. but Mrs. Jubal who took the call.

Jubal, of course, longed to regain his former position, but he scorned to do it at his wife's expense.

The world began to forget him.

The brilliant circle of friends who had surrounded Mr. Jubal in his bachelor chambers now surrounded his wife, for it was she who was " Jubal."

Nobody wanted to talk to him or drink with him, and when he attempted to join in the conversation,

nobody listened to his remarks ; it was just as if he were not present, and his wife was treated as if she were an unmarried woman.

Then Mr. Jubal grew very lonely, and in his loneliness he began to frequent the cafés.

One evening he was at a restaurant, trying to find somebody to talk to, and ready to talk to anybody willing to listen to him. All at once he caught sight of his old friend the commercial traveller, sitting at a table by himself, evidently very bored. " Thank goodness," he thought, " here's somebody to spend an hour with—it's old Lundberg."

He went to Mr. Lundberg's table and said " good evening." But no sooner had he done so than his friend's face changed in so extraordinary a manner that Jubal wondered whether he had made a mistake.

" Aren't you Lundberg ? " he asked.

" Yes ! "

" Don't you know me ? I'm Jubal ! "

" No ! "

" Don't you know your old friend Peal ? "

" Peal died a long time ago."

Then Jubal understood that he was, from a certain point of view, dead, and he went away.

On the following day he left the stage for ever and opened a school for singing, with the title of a professor.

Then he went to foreign countries, and remained abroad for many years.

Sadness, for he mourned for himself as for a dead friend, and sorrow were fast making an old man of him. But he was glad that it should be so, for, he thought, if I'm old, it won't last much longer. But as he did not age quite as fast as he would have liked, he bought himself a wig with long white curls. He felt better after that, for it disguised him completely, so completely that he did not know himself.

With long strides, his hands crossed on his back, he walked up and down the pavements, lost in a brown study; he seemed to be looking for some one, or expecting some one. If his eyes met the glance of other eyes, he did not respond to the question in them; if anybody tried to make his acquaintance, he would never talk of anything but things and objects. And he never said "I" or "I find," but always "it seems." He had lost himself, as he discovered one day just as he was going to shave. He was sitting before his looking-glass, his chin covered with a lather of soap; he raised the hand which held the razor and looked into the glass; then he beheld the room behind his back, but he could not see his face, and all at once he realised how matters stood. Now he was filled with a passionate yearning to find himself again. He had given the best part of himself to his wife, for she had his will, and so he decided to go and see her.

When he was back in his native country and walked through the streets in his white wig, not a soul recognised him. But a musician who had been

in Italy, meeting him in town one day, said in a loud voice, "There goes a maestro!"

Immediately Jubal imagined that he was a great composer. He bought some music paper and started to write a score; that is to say, he wrote a number of long and short notes on the lines, some for the violins, of course, others for the wood-wind, and the remainder for the brass instruments. He sent his work to the Conservatoire. But nobody could play the music, because it was not music, but only notes.

A little later on he was met by an artist who had been in Paris. "There goes a model!" said the artist. Jubal heard it, and at once believed that he was a model, for he believed everything that was said of him, because he did not know who or what he was.

Presently he remembered his wife, and he resolved to go and see her. He did go, but she had married again, and she and her second husband, who was a baron, had gone abroad.

At last he grew tired of his quest, and, like all tired men, he felt a great yearning for his mother. He knew that she was a widow and lived in a cottage in the mountains, so one day he went to see her.

"Don't you know me?" he asked.

"What is your name?" asked the mother.

"My name is your son's name. Don't you know it?"

" My son's name was Peal, but yours is Jubal, and I don't know Jubal."

" You disown me ? "

" As you disowned yourself and your mother."

" Why did you rob me of my will when I was a little child ? "

" You gave your will to a woman."

" I had to, because it was the only way of winning her. But why did you tell me I had no will ? "

" Well, your father told you that, my boy, and he knew no better ; you must forgive him, for he is dead now. Children, you see, are not supposed to have a will of their own, but grown-up people are."

" How well you explain it all, mother ! Children are not supposed to have a will, but grown-up people are."

" Now, listen to me, Gustav," said his mother, " Gustav Peal. . . ."

These were his two real names, and when he heard them from her lips, he became himself again. All the parts he had played—kings and demons, the maestro and the model—cut and ran, and he was but the son of his mother.

He put his head on her knees and said, " Now, let me die here, for at last I am at home."

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The Golden Helmets in the Alleberg

The Golden Helmets in the Alleberg

ANDERS was the son of poor people, and in his youth he had wandered through many kingdoms, with a bale of cloth and a yard-measure on his back. But as he grew older he came to the conclusion that it would be better to wear the king's uniform and carry a rifle on his shoulder, and therefore he went and enlisted in the Västgotadal regiment. And one day it happened that he was sent to Stockholm on sentry duty.

Friend Cask, as he was now called, was on leave one day, and he made up his mind to spend it at the "Fort." But when he came to the gate he found that he had not a sixpence, and consequently he had to remain outside.

For a long time he stood staring at the railings, and then he thought, "I'll just walk round; perhaps I'll come across a stile; if the worst comes to the worst, I'll climb over."

The sun was setting; he walked along the shore,

at the foot of the mountain, and the railings were high above him; he could hear the sound of music and singing. Cask went round and round, but found no stile, and at last the railings disappeared in a forest of nut trees. When he was tired he sat down on a hillock and began to crack nuts.

Suddenly a squirrel appeared before him and put up its tail.

"Leave my nuts alone!" it said.

"I will, if you'll take me to a stile," said Cask.

"Part of the way, then," said the squirrel. It hopped along and the soldier followed, until all at once it had vanished.

Then a hedgehog came rustling along.

"Come with me and I'll show you the stile," it said.

"Go with you? not if I know it."

But in spite of his remark the hedgehog followed him.

Next an adder joined them. It was very genteel; it lisped and could twist itself into a knot.

"Follow me," it said, "*I* will show you the stile."

"I follow," said Cask.

"But you mutht be genteel; you muthtn't tread on me. I like nithe people."

"Well, a soldier isn't exactly genteel," said Cask, "but I'm not so terribly uncouth."

"Tread on it," said the hedgehog, "else it will bite you, ever so genteely."

The adder reared its neck and rustled away.

" Stop ! " shouted the hedgehog, attacking the snake. " I am not as genteel as you are, but I show my bristles openly, I do ! "

And then it killed the snake and disappeared.

Now the soldier was alone in the wood and very sorry he felt that he had rejected the society of the prickly hedgehog.

It had grown dark, but the crescent of the moon shone between the birch leaves, and it was quite still.

The soldier fancied that he could see a big yellow hand moving backwards and forwards. He went close up to it, and then he saw that it was a yellow maple leaf, which seemed to gesticulate with its fingers, although nobody could possibly understand what it wanted to say.

As he stood there, watching it, he heard an asp trembling :

" Huh ! I'm so cold," said the asp, " for my feet are wet, and I *am* so frightened."

" What are you frightened of ? " asked the soldier.

" Well, of the dwarf who is sitting in the mountain."

Now the soldier realised what the maple leaf meant, and there was no doubt about it, he saw a dwarf sitting in the mountain, cooking porridge.

" Who are you ? " asked the dwarf.

" I belong to the Västgotadal regiment ; where do you come from ? "

" I," said the dwarf, " I am in the Alleberg."

" The Alleberg is in the Västgota country," answered the soldier.

" We have removed it to this place," replied the dwarf.

" You lie ! " exclaimed the soldier, seized the pot by its handle and threw the porridge into the fire.

" Now we'll have a look at the mouse-hole," he said, and went right into the mountain.

There he found a giant sitting by a huge fire, making an iron bar red-hot.

" Good day, good day," said the soldier, stretching out his hand.

" Good day to you," said the giant, giving him the red-hot iron bar.

Cask took the iron and pressed it so hard that it hissed.

" You have got very warm hands, I must say," he said. " What's your name ? "

" I'm the giant Swede," said the troll.

" That was a Swedish hand-shake of yours, anyhow, and now I realise that I am in the Alleberg. Are the golden helmets still asleep ? "

" Will you be quiet ! " exclaimed the giant, threatening him with the red-hot bar.

" You shall see them, because you belong to the Västgotadal regiment, but first of all you must solve my riddle," he continued.

" If you want to fight one of your own countrymen, well and good. But first of all, put that fiery thing away ! "

" Very well, Cask, you shall recite the history of Sweden while I smoke my pipe. Then I will show you the golden helmets. The whole history of Sweden, please."

" I can easily do that, although I was not one of the top dogs at the military school. Let me try and recall it to memory."

" There is one condition : you must not mention the name of a single king ; for if you do, those inside will get angry ; and when they get angry, then, you know. . . ."

" It will be awfully difficult. But light your pipe and I'll begin. Here's a match ! "

The soldier scratched his head and began :

" One—two—three ! In the year 1161, or thereabouts, Sweden first came into existence ; a kingdom, a king, and an archbishop — is that enough ? "

" No," said Swede, " not at all. Begin again."

" Very well, then ! In the year 1359 the Swedish people became a nation, for then the Parliament of the four estates first met, and it continued to meet, with interruptions, until 1866."

"Well, but you're a soldier," said Swede, " surely you'll have a few words to say about wars."

" There are only two wars of any importance, and they ended, the first with the peace of Brömsebro in 1645, when we got Herjedalen, Jämtland, and Gottland, and the second with the peace of Röskilde in 1658, when we got Schonen, Halland, Blekinge, and

Bohuslän. And that is all there is of the history of Sweden."

" But you forget the constitutions ? "

" Well, we had an autocracy from 1680 to 1718 ; then there followed a period of freedom until 1789, and this was followed again by an autocracy. Then came Adlersparre's revolution in 1809, and he got Hans Järke to draw up the constitution which is still surviving. That is all you need know. Haven't you finished your pipe yet ? "

" There ! " said the giant. " It wasn't so bad on the whole ! And now you shall see the golden helmets."

The troll arose with difficulty and went into the interior of the mountain ; the soldier followed at his heels.

" Tread softly ! " said the giant, pointing to a knight with a golden helmet who was leaning against a door, made of rock, apparently fast asleep. But before the words had been out of his mouth, Cask stumbled and the iron on the heel of his shoe struck a stone so forcibly that it emitted sparks. The golden helmet awoke at once, just as if he had been a sleeping sentry, and called :

" Is it time ? "

" Not yet ! " answered the giant.

The knight with the golden helmet sat down again and instantly fell asleep.

The giant opened a mountain wall and the soldier looked into a huge hall. A table, that seemed to

have no end, ran through the centre of the hall, and in the twilight the soldier could see a brilliant gathering of knights with golden helmets sitting in arm-chairs, the backs of which were decorated with golden crowns. At the head of the table sat a man who seemed head and shoulders taller than the rest ; his beard reached to his waist, like the beard of Moses or Joshua, and he held a hammer in his hand.

All of them seemed fast asleep, although it was neither the sleep which restores strength, nor the sleep which is called eternal sleep.

" Now, pay attention," said the giant, " to-day is the great commemoration day."

He pressed a finger on a large garnet in the mountain rock, and a thousand flames shot up.

The golden helmets awoke.

" Who goes there ? " asked the man with the prophet's beard.

" Swede," answered the giant.

" A good name ! " replied Gustav Eriksson Wasa, for it was he. " How much time has passed away ? "

" In years, after the birth of Christ, one thousand nine hundred and three."

" Time flies. But have you made any progress ? Are you still a country and a nation ? "

" We are. But since Gustavus I. the country has grown. Jämtland, Herjedalen, and Gottland have been added."

" Who conquered them ? "

" Well, it was in the time of Queen Christina ; but her guardians really conquered them."

" And then ? "

" Then we got Schonen, Halland, Blekinge, and Bohuslän."

" The deuce you did ! Who won them ? "

" Charles X."

" Well, and then ? "

" Nothing else."

" Is that all ? "

Somebody knocked on the table.

"Erich the saint wishes to speak," said Gustav Wasa.

" My name is Erich Jedvardson, and I never was a saint. May I be allowed to ask Swede what became of my Finland ? "

" Finland belongs to Russia, by its own wish, after the peace of Fredrikshamn in 1809, when the Finnish nation swore allegiance to the Czar."

Gustavus II., Adolfus, asked permission to speak.

" Where are the Baltic provinces ? " he asked.

" Reclaimed by their rightful owner," answered Swede.

" And the emperor ? Is there still an emperor ? "

" There are two ; one in Berlin, and one in Vienna."

" Two of the House of Habsburg ? "

" No, one of the House of Habsburg, and the other of the House of Hohenzollern."

"Incredible! And the Catholics in North Germany—are they converted?"

"No, the Catholics form the majority in the German Parliament, and the emperor at Berlin is trying to put pressure on the College of Cardinals, with a view to influencing the choice of the next Pope."

"There is still a Pope, then?"

"Oh! yes, although one of them has just died."

"And what does the Hohenzollern want in Rome?"

"No one knows; some say that it is his ambition to become Roman-German emperor of the Evangelical Confession."

"A syncretistic emperor dreamt of by John George of Saxony! I don't want to hear any more. The ways of Providence are strange, and we mortals, what are we? Dust and ashes!"

Charles XII. asked permission to speak.

"Can Swede tell me what has become of Poland?"

"Poland is no more. It has been split up."

"Split up? And Russia?"

"Russia recently celebrated the foundation of Petersburg, and the Lord Mayor of Stockholm walked in the procession."

"As a prisoner?"

"No, as a guest. All nations are on friendly terms now, and not very long ago a French army, commanded by a German field-marshall, invaded China."

" Delicious ! Are people now the friends of their enemies ? "

" Yes, they are all penetrated by a Christian spirit, and there is a permanent Committee for the Preservation of Peace established at the Hague."

" A what ? "

" A permanent Committee for the Preservation of Peace."

" Then my time is over ! God's will be done ! "

The king closed his visor and remained silent.

Charles XI. claimed attention.

" Well, Swede, what about the finances of the old country ? "

" It's difficult to answer your question, for I'm afraid they know nothing of keeping accounts. But one or two things are certain : that quite half the kingdom has been pledged to the foreigner for about three hundred millions."

" Oh ! Lord ! "

" And the municipal debts amount to about two hundred millions."

" Two hundred ! "

" And in the years 1881 to 1885 one hundred and forty-six thousand Swedes emigrated."

" Enough ! I don't want to hear any more ! "

Gustav Wasa knocked on the table with his hammer.

" As far as I can understand the matter, the country is in a bad way. Sluggards you are, lazy,

envious, irresponsible sluggards; too idle to bestir yourselves, but quick enough to prevent anybody else from doing anything. But tell me, Swede, what about my church and my priests?"

"The priests of the church are farmers and dairy-keepers. The bishops have an income of thirty thousand crowns, and collect money, exactly as they did before the Recess of Vesteraes; moreover, nearly all of them are heretics, or free-thinkers, as they call themselves. Men are beginning to expect some sort of a Reformation."

"Indeed? . . . And what is the meaning of this music and singing up here?"

"This is the 'Fort.' That is, a mountain, where they have a collection of all the national keepsakes, just as if the nation were anticipating its end and making its last will and testament, gathering together all the mementoes of the past. It shows reverence for the ancestors, but nothing else."

"What we have heard on this commemoration day seems to prove that the deeds of our forefathers have been engulfed in the ocean of time. One thing swims on the surface, another sinks to the bottom. Here we are sitting like the shadows of our former selves, and to you, who are alive, we must remain shadows. . . . Put out the lights!"

The giant Swede extinguished the lights and went out; the soldier followed close behind him and climbed into something which looked like a cage.

"If you say a word to anybody of what you have

seen and heard," said the giant, " you will be sorry for it."

" I can quite believe that," answered Cask, " but I shall always remember it. That they should have squandered the old country in drink and pledged it to the foreigner ! It's too bad—if it's true."

" Click " went the turbine ; and the lift with the soldier shot upwards to the " Fort." And there he stood, in the sunset, and the country looked just as it had looked when the chimes in the belfry of Häsjoer chimed, and Gustav Wasa entered Stockholm, surrounded by his generals.

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Little Bluewing finds the Goldpowder

Little Bluewing finds the Goldpowder

THE rich man had visited the poor island and fallen in love with it. He could not have said why, but he was charmed; probably the island resembled some memory of his childhood, or, perhaps, a beautiful dream.

He bought the island, built a villa, and planted all sorts of lovely trees, shrubs, and flowers. And all around was the sea; he had his own landing-stage, with a flag-staff and white boats; oak trees, as tall as a church, shaded his house, and cool breezes gently swept the green meadows. He had a wife, children, servants, cattle; he had everything, except one thing: it was but a trifle, but it was more important than anything else in the world, and yet he had forgotten it until the very last: he had no spring water. Wells were sunk and rocks were blasted, but all he got was brown, brackish water; it was filtered until it looked as clear as crystal, but it remained brackish. And that was where the shoe pinched.

Then there came to the island a man endowed with great gifts ; he had been lucky in all his enterprises, and was one of the most famous men in the world. Everybody remembered how he struck the mountain with his diamond staff and produced water from the rock, like Moses. Now he was to bore on the island and see whether the mountain would yield water, as other mountains had done. They spent a hundred, a thousand, several thousand crowns, but found none but brackish water. There was no blessing on their undertaking. And it was brought home to the rich man that money will not buy everything, not even, when the worst comes to the worst, a drink of fresh water. Thereupon he grew despondent, and life seemed to hold no more happiness in store for him.

The schoolmaster searched the old books, and then sent for a venerable old man, who came and brought his divining rod ; but it was no use.

But the clergyman was a great deal wiser. He assembled all the school children one day, and offered a prize to the one who could bring him a plant called " goldpowder," in Latin *Chrysosplenium*, which will only grow near a spring.

" It has a flower," he said, " like the bird's-eye and leaves like the saxifrage, and it looks as if it had gold dust on its top leaves. Remember that ! "

" A flower like the bird's-eye and leaves like the saxifrage," repeated the children ; and they ran

into the wood and the fields to look for the gold-powder.

Not one of the children found it ; a little boy, it is true, came home with some milk-weed, which has a tiny bit of gold dust on the points of its leaves ; but the milk-weed is poisonous, and it was not at all what was wanted. And finally the children grew tired of looking for it and gave it up.

But there lived on the island a little girl, too small yet to go to school. Her father had served in the dragoons, and owned a little farm, but he was rather poor than rich. His only treasure was his little daughter, whom everybody in the village called " Little Bluewing," because she always wore a sky-blue dress with wide sleeves, which fluttered like wings when she moved. There is, by the bye, a little blue butterfly whom the people call bluewing ; you can see it in the summer sitting on the tall blades of the grass, and its wings resemble a flax blossom ; a fluttering flax blossom with antennæ instead of filaments.

Little Bluewing, the dragoon's little bluewing, that is, was not like other children ; she always talked very sensibly, but she often said queer things, and everybody was puzzled to know where she got them from. All living things loved her, even the animals ; fowls and calves ran up to her when they saw her, and she even dared to stroke the bull. She frequently went out by herself and stayed away a long time, but when anybody asked her where she had

been, she could not tell. But she had had the most wonderful adventures ; she had seen strange things ; she had met venerable old men and women, who had told her no end of wonderful stories. The dragoon let her do as she liked, for he knew that a guardian spirit was watching over her.

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One morning Little Bluewing went out for a walk. She ran through fields and meadows, singing songs which nobody had ever heard, and which came into her heart from nowhere. The morning sun shone brightly and seemed so young, as if it had only just been born ; the air was fresh and sweet, and the evaporating dew cooled her little face.

When she came to the wood, she met an old man in a green dress.

" Good morning, Little Bluewing," said the old man, " I am the gardener at Sunnyglade ; come and look at my flowers."

" Too much honour for me," answered Little Bluewing.

" Not at all, for you have never ill-used flowers."

They walked together to the strand and crossed a little bridge, which led to an islet.

On the islet was a wonderful garden. Every flower, large and small, grew there, and everything was in order, just as if the garden had been a book.

The old man lived in a house which was built of growing ever-green trees—pines, fir trees, and junipers ; the floor consisted of growing ever-green

shrubs. Moss and lichen grew in the crevices and held them together. The roof was made entirely of creepers, Virginia creeper, *Caprifolium*, and ivy, and it was so thick that not a drop of rain could come through. A number of bee-hives stood before the door, but butterflies lived in them instead of bees; just think of the lovely sight when they swarmed!

"I don't like torturing bees," explained the old man. "And, moreover, I consider them not at all pretty; they look like hairy coffee-beans and sting like adders."

And then they went into the garden.

"Now, you may read in the book of nature and learn the secrets and sensibilities of the plants. But you must not ask questions, only listen to what I say and answer me. . . . Now, look here, little one, on this grey stone something is growing which looks like grey paper. This is the first thing which grows when the rock becomes damp. It grows mouldy, you see, and the mould is called lichen. Here are two kinds: one looks like the horns of a reindeer, it is called reindeer-moss, and the reindeer feeds on it; and the other is called Iceland-moss, and looks like . . . now, what does it look like?"

"It looks like lungs, anyhow it says so in the natural history book."

"Quite right; looked at through a magnifying glass, it has exactly that appearance, and that is how people came to think of using it as a remedy for all sorts of diseases of the chest. Later, when the

lichen has gathered enough vegetable soil, the mosses appear; they have quite simple flowers and grow seed. They are not unlike ice-flowers, but they are also like heather and fir trees and all sorts of other things, for all plants are related. The wall-moss here looks like a fir tree, but it has seed cases, like a poppy, only rather more simple. Once moss has begun to grow on a spot, heather is not very long in coming. And if you examine heather through a strong magnifying glass, it is like milk-wort, *Epilobium* in Latin, or a rhododendron, or like an elm tree, which is nothing more nor less than a huge nettle.

"Now, we have a perfect covering for the rocks, and in this mould everything will grow. Man has domesticated a number of plants, but nature herself has directed him which to take and how to use them. Nothing is so extraordinary as the colours and ornaments which the flowers have acquired to tell the bees where the honey is. You have often seen an ear of rye, which shows a baker's implements like a signboard. And if you look at the flax, the most useful of all the plants, you will have to admit that it is the plant itself which has taught man to spin. Look right into the heart of the flower and you will find the filaments wound round the style like flax round a spindle. And to make her meaning even more plain, nature has planted a parasite, the bindweed, by its side, which winds itself round and round the plant, up and down, to and fro, like a weaver's shuttle. And isn't it wonderful that not a man, but

a butterfly, first thought of spinning the flax? People call it 'flax-spinner,' for with its own silk and the leaves of the plant it weaves little sheets and blankets for its young ones. And so cunning it is that when flax began to be cultivated, it completely adapted itself to the new conditions, so that the young ones should be hatched before the flax was harvested. And now, look at the medicinal herbs! Look at the large poppy, for instance, fiery red it is, like fever and insanity! But in the heart of the blossom is a black cross, just like the cross on the chemist's label which he puts on his poisons. In the middle of the cross is a Roman vase with little grooves. When these grooves are pricked the drug runs out, the powerful drug, which will call either death, or death's gentle brother, sleep. Yes, now you can form an idea of the generosity and wisdom of nature.

"And now, let's see about the goldpowder."

He paused to see whether Little Bluewing was at all curious. But she was not.

"And now, let's see about the goldpowder," he repeated.

Another pause! No, Little Bluewing could hold her tongue, although she was not much more than a baby.

"And now, let's see about the goldpowder," he said for the third time, "which has flowers like the bird's-eye and leaves like the saxifrage. That's its distinctive mark, and tells you where water can be

found. The bird's-eye collects dew and water in its leaves, and is in itself a tiny, clear rivulet ; but the saxifrage can break mountain rocks. There is no spring without a mountain, be the mountain never so distant. This is what the goldpowder tells all those who can understand its message. It grows here, on this island, and you shall know the spot, because your heart is pure. The rich man shall receive water for his parched soul from your tiny hand, and through you all the island shall be blessed. Go in peace, my child, and when you come to the wood where the nuts grow, you will find a silver-linden on your right ; at its foot lies a copper-coloured slow-worm, which is not dangerous. It will show you the way to the goldpowder. But before you go, you must give the old man a kiss, that is to say, if you want to."

Little Bluewing held up her lips and kissed the old man, and immediately his face changed and he looked fifty years younger.

" I have kissed a child, I have grown young again," said the gardener. " You owe me no thanks. Farewell ! "

Little Bluewing went to the wood where the nuts grew. The silver-linden was rustling in the breeze, and the humble-bees hummed and buzzed round its blossoms. The slow-worm was really there, although its copper looked a bit rusty.

" Hallo ! There is Little Bluewing, who is to have the goldpowder," said the copper snake.

" Well, you shall have it on three conditions : not to talk, not to be led astray, not to be inquisitive. Now go straight ahead and you will find the gold-powder."

Little Bluewing went straight ahead. On her way she met a woman.

" Good morning, child," said the woman. " Have you been to see the gardener at Sunnyglade ? "

" Good morning, woman," said Little Bluewing, without stopping.

" Well, you aren't a gossip," said the woman.

Next she met a gipsy.

" Where are you going to ? " asked the gipsy.

" Straight ahead," answered Little Bluewing.

" Then you won't be led astray," said the gipsy.

Then she met a milkman. But she could not understand why the horse was inside the cart and the milkman harnessed to the shafts.

" Now I shall shy and run away," said the milkman, and gave such a start that the horse fell out of the cart into the ditch. . . . " Now I shall water the rye," he went on, and took the lid off one of his milk cans.

Little Bluewing thought it strange, but continued her way without giving him as much as a look.

" And you aren't curious, either," said the milkman.

And now Little Bluewing was standing at the foot of the mountain ; the sunbeams fell through the

hazel bushes on the green leaves of a luxurious plant which shone like gold.

It was the goldpowder. Little Bluewing noticed how it followed the vein of the spring down the mountain side into the rich man's meadow.

She knelt down and gathered three flowers, put them carefully into her pinafore and took them home to her father.

The dragoon put on sword, helmet, and uniform, and went with his little daughter to the clergyman. And all three went to the rich man.

"Little Bluewing has found the goldpowder!" said the clergyman, as soon as he entered the drawing-room. "And now the whole village will be rich before long, because it is sure to become a summer resort."

And it became a summer resort before long; steamers and shop people arrived; an inn and a post-office were built; a doctor settled on the island, and a chemist. Gold poured into the village all during the summer, and that is the story of the goldpowder, which can transform poverty into wealth.

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